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Two Children in the Woods

"HE PUT ONE LEG OVER THE SIDE."

Two Children in the Woods

By
ROSALIND RICHARDS

Illustrated by
EDITH FRANCIS FOSTER

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TWO CHILDREN IN THE WOODS

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TO

H. R.

AND TO

E. J. F.

E. M. F.

S. F.

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PART I

THE RAGGED MINE

Two Children in the Woods

CHAPTER I

GOING AWAY FROM HOME

I WAS going away from home for a long visit. Perhaps this sounds like a delightful thing to do, and it was, as it turned out, nicer than I can ever possibly say, but I am sure there are other children who will know how very miserable I was before I started.

Billy and I have never had any one to play with but each other, and Mamma and Papa. There is no town at home, only the woods and our house, besides Papa's great mills and the mill-village, and it

seems as if this made everything more precious and delightful, and made us besides more busy. There are the flowers and the dear dogs to see to, and we have lessons with Mother, and whenever he can get off, long walks with Papa. Then there is the rocky pasture and the woods to climb and scramble in, and sometimes we are allowed to go to the mills and get sawdust from the enormous sawdust heaps to play with and delightful smooth pieces of wood of different shapes; and there are the pigeons, and our aquarium, and fish are more affectionate than people think. I did not see at first how I could bear to leave the things at home, but if I had not gone away we should never have known Mr. Charles or James, and perhaps I should never, or not until I was actually grown up, have gone to the Great Woods.

The first visit, to Mrs. Carey's, was as different as possible from the trip to the

woods, being in the city. It was besides much shorter, but it was there I first saw Mr. Charles, and James. It was when dear Mother first was ill. We did not know of course that she was really ill, or that Papa was worried, so imagine how we felt when it was decided that Papa must take her South for a change and that we were to go away, I to Mrs. Carey's, who is Mother's godmother, and Billy to Aunt Eleanor's.

In some ways, though not in many, it would be nice to be a boy. They do say so easily what they really think, and never — or very seldom — worry afterwards about its having perhaps been impolite or greedy. It was at breakfast time that Papa explained these plans to us. I had to keep looking at my plate, so that he should not see that my eyes were full of tears; my throat felt sore and tight with trying to speak cheerfully, but Billy, when Aunt Eleanor asked whether he would not

like to make a good long visit to her and Uncle Eustace at Fort Meredith, only said "No, thank you," most politely, and went on calmly eating up his porridge.

Aunt Eleanor is a queer person to be Papa's only sister. She never stays with us for more than a few days at a time, being busy with dinner-parties and that sort of thing in New York. She is very fashionable and what I think you would call conventional; she never in the least approves of me, and when she looks at me through her lorgnette I always feel as if my hair might not be tidy nor my nails quite right; but she loves Papa, who laughs at her a great deal, and Billy, and always laughs with them; and I think that she adores, and is a little frightened of, dear Mother.

When Billy said this, which he did most funnily and calmly, Aunt Eleanor laughed, and said that she would not for

the world interfere with his plans, and persuaded Papa to send him to stay on the farm with Mrs. Tibbets, who was our nurse when we were little; but it was still thought best for me to go to Mrs. Carey's.

At first I did not see how I could bear to be four whole weeks away from home. Mrs. Carey lives in Boston, in a great big house on a street corner. It would be a delightful place to play at being princess in, having great rooms with old heavy hangings and thick rugs, besides many gilded mirrors, and there is a kind of rich dim look to everything. You cannot very well play princess by yourself, though, and besides I cannot think how any one ever thought of building houses in such a stupid way, exactly alike, like slices, down the street, and all hard brick or stone. Aunt Eleanor said it was a great privilege to stay there, and that I must make the most of it, but Papa only said he knew I

would try to be a good cheerful girl, for Mother's sake. I did try, and wrote every day to him and to dear Mother and to Billy.

Mrs. Carey was very kind and gentle to me. After luncheon, and at afternoon tea, she sat working at some wonderful fine lace-work, and told me about Mamma when she was a little girl, while I sat opposite her in a high chair and did my sampler, which I was ashamed of, for I am big enough to sew better than I do, and it was queer and knotty; and when she went up to her rooms she left some big old picture-books for me to look at, and wound up the music-box. She often took me driving in the park, and when it did not rain, Marcella, who is Mrs. Carey's maid, took me for a walk in the Public Garden. It is queer though to have to be taken to walk by some one else when you are not used to it, and besides it rained a great deal at that time, and I am afraid I often

forgot about being cheerful, and sat looking out of the window at the street, and wondering what Billy was doing on the farm.

CHAPTER II

THE BOY NEXT DOOR

If I had tried harder to keep busy, and had invented some good game to play, I do not think I should ever have begun making faces at the little boy next door, which I am ashamed to say got to be quite a comfort. I cannot think now how I can have done it, because of course I was very much too big, being as I have said more than ten and a half. He was a good deal smaller; and one day, when I was in the middle of the horriblest face I could imagine, and he was making one as bad, his mother came and saw us, and that stopped the game.

It was a few days after this that I first saw the boy in the bay-window on the

other side. He was about a year older than I. He had scarlet stockings, and brown eyes twinkling with fun and liveliness. I was rather staring across, not thinking exactly about him, but only of what fun we could have together if he were Billy and we were in some place less horrid than a city, when he suddenly put up the sash and scrambled out on to the little balcony on which both bay-windows opened. He signed to me to put the sash up on my side, and I tried, and it came up quite easily, so I climbed out too.

"You know I call this jolly!" the boy said. There was a hurdy-gurdy two doors off and opposite a man was washing windows. Another man had a hose and was washing the sidewalk, and a big lazy dog sat sunning himself in peace on his front steps. We stood and watched them, and different things which kept coming down the street.

" Any one looking after you ? " the boy then asked me, and when I asked him what he meant, he said:

" Any nurse, guardian, constable, or jailor ? "

I told him no, unless perhaps Marcella, and he said:

" You're in luck," and whistled. I asked him if he had some one, and he said, " Jemima, yes."

I thought at first Jemima was a person, but it was only one of the things he said instead of " Gracious ! " I asked him if he lived here, and he said no, that he was only making a visit to his Aunt Louisa, " For two solid months, worse luck."

I asked him where did he live, and he said in no particular place, that he lived with his father, who was a geologist and engineer, and rather famous, and that they had stayed in places all about the world, and sometimes in wild mining camps and frontier stations.

"You wouldn't think it," he said, "but I've been in Korea; and now I wear gloves and have a nurse."

You cannot imagine anything more scornful than the way he said this.

He sat on the edge of the balcony and dangled his scarlet legs, and I told him about Billy, and the dear dogs, and the pigeons.

"I say," he said, when it was nearly lunch time, "We can talk across in deaf and dumb letters. I can talk them as far as X. I'll teach you —" and then he said, "Hi! Ginger!" and hopped back on to the balcony and in at the window with one jump, and I could hear a French kind of voice saying, "Monsieur Gems, I defend you to do zat some more!"

We did talk in deaf and dumb language whenever, as James said, — his name was James, — "they" were not after him. It made no difference knowing only as far as X, for, as he explained, KS, I, and

S can be put in the place of X, Y, and Z, and give a kind of foreign look besides. We did not see much of each other at first, because of his nurse. She was French. James's name for her was Gorgonzola, which he says is really a very strong kind of cheese, but her real name was Thérèse. She was very strict about his playing with strange children, and we never looked out when she was near the window.

" Of course I could run her from here to Bunker Hill," James said, " but I gave my word to Father to behave."

And he did always mind her when they were in the street, and wore his gloves (though sometimes inside out, which she could not bear), but when she was unreasonable in the house he would only obey what his aunt told him.

Afterwards though we were allowed to play with each other as much as we liked, from his Aunt Louisa turning out

to be the rather thin, tightly-dressed lady who often came to call on Mrs. Carey. We usually played in James's house, from not wanting to disturb Mrs. Carey, who I am afraid never knew about all the different things we played. I thought I ought to tell her, but she is a little deaf, and so is Marcella, and some of our games sounded queer when you tried to explain them; and when she patted my hand, and said she could always trust Mother's daughter, I often felt a little guilty, particularly about the candle-grease.

It was my game at first. You drew cold water in the bath-tub and held a lighted candle over it, and the wax dropped and spread out into pretty little cups, like flowers. I also moulded things, cups and saucers, from melting candles, and I wished I had as clever fingers as my cousin Kitty, who once came to stay with us, and made a whole dinner set for her dolls from the blue and white candles

in the dining-room. (Mamma said that the dishes were beautifully made, but that we ought to have asked her first about the candles.) James changed the game a little, and we made candle-grease balls instead, like marbles, and dropped them from the landing above into the big hanging lantern in the hall, which never is lighted. We got it over half-full, and I wonder if any one will ever find them.

James had another game, which was to drop shoes and rubbers and sometimes oranges from the top landing down all the four stories, because it annoyed Thérèse so frightfully; but I thought it was hard for Maggie, who is the housemaid, and James said that that was quite true, and we gave it up.

CHAPTER III

THE RAGGED MINE

THESE were indoor games though, which we played in rainy weather, and we stopped them as soon as we got interested in the Ragged Mine. Of course it was not a real mine, which could not very well happen in a city, but a great hole which the workmen were digging in James's Aunt Louisa's back yard, something about the water works.

We began to get interested in it when she — James's Aunt Louisa — forbade our playing Rocky Mountains along the back-yard fences. I suppose it was not a very good plan, being in the city, but it was the only climbing I had had since I came away from home, and besides,

James was so funny. Thérèse forbade our climbing fences at once, but James would not stop until his aunt forbade it too. He was of course quite out of Thérèse's reach on the fence, and she cannot bear him to talk to her in strange languages, of which he knows a good many; so when she scolded and stormed at him, and said " Mais c'est affreux, ces jeux-là ! " he dangled his scarlet legs and called her a " Lilien-schlanker Crocodil," and other good names, both German and Italian, which he translated for me.

When the Ragged Mine got deeper, with raggedy edges, and queer great pipes below, we stood and watched the workmen nearly all the morning, and when they were gone home to dinner we used to jump down and climb out again, until it got too deep. At last it went down so far that not even the workmen's heads stuck out, and then we heard them saying that they would have to dig into the

house next door. That was tremendously exciting, though nothing to what happened afterwards. We watched them breaking into the brick walls with picks, and heard the ring and tumble of the bricks, and at last there was a black hole leading into the other people's cellar. We watched and watched it, and imagined different things there were inside. Once we saw through the hole the apron of a person who had come into the cellar to get something, and once a candle lighted up the darkness for a minute.

One day when the men had gone home to dinner we stood watching, and the black hole looked more interesting than anything you ever saw. James looked carefully to see if Thérèse might not be watching, and then said it was a chance we mightn't have again in all our lives, and put one leg over the side. He jumped, and I hung and dropped; and then I said:

"Oh James, we never can get back again."

He thought we could, by standing a piece of pipe on end. "And even if we can't, the workmen will be back in an hour, and they will jump us out. That will be rather bad, for then we shall be late to dinner, and Thérèse will find out, and Aunt Louisa will forbid us playing here any more, but we can't help it now."

It was the blackest darkness that I ever saw inside, and cold, with a damp, earthy smell. I felt like ten Guy Fawkeses rolled into one, and said "Oh!" quite suddenly, when James, who was feeling for a door, found me instead. He found a door in a few minutes and we went up some dark stairs, and found ourselves in a passageway beside the furnace. Beyond us was another door, leading up another flight of stairs, but between us and it was the servants' dining-room, with the door

wide open, and all the servants sitting at their dinner. James said:

"Of course we could make a rush and get past them, but we might want to come again, and besides we are not doing anything that we are ashamed of." So he went forward, and in the very polite way he has of speaking, said:

"We have come from Mrs. Mixter's, which is next door, and we are going up-stairs," which I think was a brave thing to do. I am not afraid of swimming beyond my depth, and once when a big boy knocked Billy down I am ashamed to say that I climbed up the boy's back and bit him, which was a thing no lady ought to have done, but of speaking to strange people I am dreadfully afraid. They stopped eating and stared at us, and the very fat one, that we found out afterwards was the cook, dropped her knife and fork with a rattle on her plate.

We went up-stairs. No one spoke to

us, and no cross voice called suddenly down to know what we were doing, which I was a little afraid of. The door beyond the china closet was shut, so we did not look in, but the next door was open, and it was the most interesting room you can imagine, as the things in it were so different from what we were used to. There was a row of oars, hung up against the wall, some with letters painted on them, and on the mantelpiece a row of silver cups, covered with letters too. There were a great many queer iron tools, and more boots than you would think that any one ever could wear, and guns. We examined these interesting things a little, but we had not much time, so we went on up the big stairs to the next flight.

A door stood a little way open, with blue smoke, of cigarettes, James said, coming out of it. We stood still a minute, and I am ashamed to say my heart began to thump, and then we knocked, and

some one said "No, Hannah, I sha'n't want any lunch to-day." We knocked again, and then went in. It was a big room, all leather, with a bright fire burning. There were crutches leaning against the wall, and on a low leather sofa lay a tall young man. He was reading. He had broad shoulders, but was very, very thin. He had rumpled-up dark hair and long white hands. He looked up as we came in, with softly bright dark eyes, which looked surprised and amused, and very, very tired, all together. Then he put down his book, and took his cigarette from his lips and stared at us.

James made a little bow, and explained how we had come, only he got a little mixed up and just said that we had happened to come up from the cellar.

The young man lay still staring at us, quite quietly, and not as if he were surprised at all. After awhile he said:

" Who might you happen to be? " and James said, " James Auchinbreck and Flora Maxwell; " and he said, " Hout mon! " very softly, which James says is Scotch, as of course our names are. He asked us if we preferred cellars generally, and James explained to him where we lived, and told him about the hole between the two houses, and that if we were dirty that was the reason, and asked did we disturb him.

He said " Not at all! " and asked us very politely to sit down, which we did, in the two big leather armchairs by the fire.

I don't believe anybody ever had a nicer call. He was very much interested in the Ragged Mine, when James explained about it, and said he would like to come down and climb through it too, " if it wasn't for his timber leg." I got entirely over being shy, and we talked about the things at home, and it seemed only a minute when a clock struck quarter to

one, with a set of pretty soft bells. James stood up quickly, and shook hands, and said:

"I am very sorry, but we have to scoot, or Thérèse will know." He asked us to come again the next day, and we said we would.

It was a narrow thing. Fortunately a pretty tall piece of pipe was standing against the side of the hole. I got from that to James's shoulder, and so out, and then I pulled as hard as I could, and James scrambled and tumbled up on top of me.

"Ginger!" he said, rubbing the clay off on his trousers, for there really wasn't any other place to rub his hands.

"Never mind, Flora, it was worth it, even if we are put on bread and water for a month."

Then we *flew*, and I was in time to get a little clean, and smooth my hair, but

James said afterwards that Thérèse had to send him up-stairs three times to scrub his finger-nails.

We went the next day, and the next and next and next. It was the best time I ever had in all my life. The way got to be quite natural to us, and the workmen jumped us in and out of the hole. The third day Hannah, who is the housemaid at the house next door, thanked us for coming, and cried, and said it was the first thing that had brought the light into her Mr. Charles's face this weary year; and after this the cook nearly always had gingerbread for us, or little tarts or cookies, and we told Mr. Charles, and used to bring them up into his room and have feasts.

We called him Mr. Charles, too. You felt right off as if you had known him all your life. We played games, and sometimes he read aloud to us from ballads and splendid things about fighting. Some-

times we read to him, but mostly we talked and talked, about every kind of thing you can imagine, and then we had discussions about things we either liked or did not like. For instance, Mr. Charles does not like cats, nor playing with starfish and jellyfish at the seashore. I do not like cities, or going to places where you have to talk to grown-up people, or wading in bogs, or wet things like snails or polly-wogs (at least I did not then), while James can see no sense nor pleasure in anything to do with dolls. And as Mr. Charles said, we all " enlarged each other's points of view materially on these and kindred topics." Then he got James to bring up things from the room down-stairs, rowing cups and microscopes, and horns of deer, and explained to us about them. I was thinking how splendid to know how to do so many things, and very stupidly, for I might have known from the way Hannah shook her head and sighed, I asked him

how soon he would be quite well and go hunting again.

He was silent a little while, and then said quite gently that he should not hunt again; that he had been hurt in an accident, and should not walk again except on crutches. James's eyes filled right up with tears, and he could not bear it that he had talked so much about all the things he used to be able to do, but Mr. Charles said he did not mind in the least, and laughed his soft amused laugh, and said that it gave him a chance of showing off to some one.

You would think that all this time Thérèse would have found us out, but it was while she was at supper that we went to see Mr. Charles, and Mary Donnelly, who is the cook, and knew about it, would never tell. Thérèse did find out at last though, and told James's Aunt Louisa, and we were forbidden ever to go through the Ragged Mine again. Mrs. Mixter

was very angry about it. She said she was surprised at us, and that we had been gossiping with other people's servants and with Irish workmen, and that she should speak to Mrs. Carey about me; and when we tried to tell her about Mr. Charles, and that it was to see him that we climbed into the other house, she said she did not care to hear any more discussion, and that we were to leave the room.

James was white with angriness, but the next morning he was at the window as soon as I came down, and signed to me to come right over. His Aunt Louisa had a letter, which she handed to us, and asked very stiffly if we could explain it. The note said:

"DEAR COUSIN LOUISA: — This is not to rake up old scores, but to ask you to let the children come over as they have been coming. They are better than a

string of doctors, and I think you will not refuse.

"Yours,

"C. WAINWRIGHT."

He really was her cousin all the time, only they had quarrelled about some money which had been left to Mr. Charles, and which James's Aunt Louisa thought she ought to have had.

Mrs. Carey was so pleased when she heard of our going to see him that she cried, and kissed my cheek. She told me all about the accident. He was captain of the crew in his last year in college, and after the race, which his boat won gloriously, some of them went for a drive, and the horses got frightened. Mr. Charles was driving, but another person caught the reins, and they were upset, and Mr. Charles was so badly crippled that he was told he could never walk without crutches, or at any rate without

limping badly. Mrs. Carey said he was perfectly brave about it, and as soon as he was well enough went right into his work, which was seeing about forests and streams, and looking after lumber districts in the woods, a little like Papa. But after that something else happened, something which made him very unhappy.

"He threw up his work," Mrs. Carey said, "and for a whole year now he has shut himself up in that great gloomy house of his grandfather's and seen no one. I went at first to see him, but he wrote me a sad little note, thanking me, but saying he knew I would understand if at first it was easier to straighten things out alone. I send him flowers from time to time, and he thanks me, and says they are like his mother's garden." She said, "Poor lad, poor Charles!" and "To think of that brilliant promise fretting itself away in suffering and bitterness."

One time after this when we were sitting with Mr. Charles (we went in by the front door now, for the Ragged Mine was finished and stopped up), we began talking, James and I, I mean, about what we were going to do when we were grown up, and after that this was what we talked about every time and it was the most interesting thing. James said he was going to be a naval engineer, and build harbors and lighthouses, and Mr. Charles said he couldn't have chosen better, and shook hands with him, his long white hand and James's brown one. I did not tell him about having wanted to be a circus dancer, for I really do not care about that any more, and besides, as Billy has decided to be an architect, I shall not have time for much besides keeping house for him; and Mr. Charles shook hands with me too. He laughed, his quiet kind of laugh, and said he hadn't made up his mind what he was going to

do when he grew up, himself, but he was thinking about it.

We went over, as I have said, nearly every morning, when suddenly, before I could believe it, Papa wrote that he was coming back with Mother, who was doing nicely, but still was not quite so well and strong as he wanted to have her, and that he would come through Boston and pick me up on the way home. I was at Mr. Charles's when the letter came, and after he had said how splendid it was that Mother was so much better, and we had talked about the new stall which Billy and I had been planning to build at home for the new goat, he drew me down beside him on the sofa and held me to him for a minute quietly, with my cheek against his. Then he said that he should write every little while, and that we must, and we promised joyfully, for we never imagined such a thing as his caring to write us. For James had to say good-by too

on the same day. He was going away with his father on a geologizing expedition far north into Canada.

I felt a sudden great loneliness as we went down the steps, and I know James felt it too, for when we got to my steps he said, " Let's come out for a minute on the balcony," and he stood with his hands in his pockets whistling and kicking softly at the railing, before he said, " He surely is a corker."

Then he arranged about collecting butterflies for me and Billy. Of course he could not send them by mail, but he planned to keep them in collecting-boxes, and bring them himself as soon as he came back; and as he did not have a great many kinds we have at home, having, as he said, " wasted long years in foreign parts," we arranged that I should collect for him too.

Some one called, " James, my man, our train will not be apt to wait ! " and I

caught a glimpse of a tall gentleman at the window of Mrs. Mixter's house. James said, " Hi, Ginger ! " and waved his hand, and hopped inside the window as his father raised the sash. I waved again and so did he, and called out " Care of Messrs. Agnew & Co., Winnipeg, Manitoba," which was to be his address. We both forgot to say good-by, but James is not the kind of person you can somehow imagine saying it to, for you feel as if you must be going to see him all your life.

PART II

THE WOODS

CHAPTER IV

THE JOURNEY

I THINK the different things that happen are a good deal like a kaleidoscope. You look through it at a lovely pattern and get used to the crimson being in one place and the blue in another; and then it all flies apart and then together again, and it is perfectly different, and perfectly delightful too; only one pattern is the loveliest of all, and you can always turn to that again.

Papa and Mamma went straight through without coming to Boston after all, and Maggie was sent on all the way to take me home. I rather hoped it might have been Miss Burnett, who is so kind and gentle,

but Maggie wanted to see her sister in Chelsea at the same time, so of course she came. Maggie has been with us for nineteen years, ever since Mamma was a little girl herself, and it is no use ever hoping that she will be different, or less strict about the way a young lady ought to behave.

The journey going home went on till long, long after it was dark on the third day from Boston. I like to travel at night. It is quite different. The train shakes and shakes, but comfortably. It is all bright cheerful yellow light inside, and outside a sort of rushing darkness going past, and you can shut your eyes and then not feel sure which way it is rushing.

Maggie is a great deal stricter about girls than boys. When I tell her so she only says,

"A boy knows what he is doing." I think *I* know, too.

She has two nephews who work in the

mill at home, and says she would never know what to do if she had had a niece. I should really think though that she would prefer one, for they, her nephews, are both very lazy, which a girl I think does not have much chance of being.

Maggie was dreadfully uninteresting all the way, and would not let me wipe the mist off the window with my hand, or even with my sleeve, and then would not imagine anything at all about the different things we might be passing in the dark.

The train shook and shook, and I wondered if James's train was shaking in the same way, and if he was sitting up still with his father and what they were talking about. He was going for three whole nights in the train. I felt as if I were still seeing him and Mr. Charles, and when a light flared at us out of the darkness, I imagined that it was Mr. Charles's fire, and that Hannah was just going to bring in tea. Then I imagined that it was a

ship's light, and that we were all on board, and all the time the train kept on shaking more and more steadily and comfortably till I was fast asleep.

I slept like an Enchanted Princess. I did not feel our stopping, or getting out of the train, or getting into the carriage, but fell against Maggie's shoulder and went sound asleep again. Imagine sleeping for the whole drive to the Mills!

That was how I never knew that there was no Papa at the station to meet us, and that one of the kaleidoscope things had happened again; Papa had had to go to look up one of the new lumber districts, far, far off, a long journey into the woods, and had taken Mamma with him to finish her rest there, and I was to come on to join them the very next morning with Maggie, and Billy was to come as soon as he got over mumps, which he was having out at Mrs. Tibbetts's farm!

Actually into the far, far woods, to go

and camp out! And Billy would come soon. But Maggie was *extremely* put about.

"Dear sakes and sirs!" she kept saying over and over to kind Miss Burnett, and all the time packing and unpacking, both together and both dreadfully decidedly.

She took me right up-stairs and put me to bed. I fell asleep while she was undressing me, and again the minute she had left me in bed, but soon she came back, still very short and decided, but bringing me a surprise, a plate of nice hot scrambled eggs and a cup of cocoa. This partly waked me up, and while Maggie was gone in the other room I began a letter to Billy with a scrap of pencil which I found in my pocket. It was pretty hard to be having mumps instead of going to Camp, even if the Tibbetts children were all having them too. Maggie came back before I had finished though, and took away my pencil.

" Miss Flora, child," she said, " What will he want with letters, and his face the size of two eggs ! "

We had breakfast in the early morning, almost before dawn, and Maggie let me have a cup of hot coffee. This time it was poor Maggie who was sleepy, and I felt wide awake. I do love the very early morning. The air is sweet and cool and fresh with dew, and there is a strange, peculiar kind of darkness, and if the moon and stars are still out they look different.

We went by the new road to the North-west station, instead of going to the regular railroad. It is six miles longer, and most of it through the biggest part of the pines. Kind Miss Burnett came with us, which was extremely good of her. I said I wished that she was going with us, and I *almost* said to her " instead of Maggie," but she smiled and said:

" The cats and I will have our camping

out at home till you come back," and kissed me for good-by.

We were really starting out on a long, long journey. I felt as if it were going to last for weeks and weeks. It still was only five o'clock in the morning. The sun was shining across with long slanting shadows and there was cool fresh dew on everything.

We went in the big regular train at first, going through miles and miles of heavy forest and stopping at little towns where there seemed to be only a sawmill and the station. Maggie was delighted. I had thought she would think very little of the forest, as there could be none of the farms and neat barns which she likes, but she said the smell of the woods in her bones did her good. She said that Scotland where she came from, was all bare lonely hills and clean woods, "not a pack of folk." She dislikes cities just as much as I do. She

thinks that very few people living in cities can be honest, and much fewer clean.

We had our dinner in a great big lighted station, with gongs sounding and brakemen ringing on the wheels of the train. It is very interesting to have dinner in a restaurant. I wanted to eat at the counter, where all sorts of different things to eat are arranged nicely in piles, but Maggie does not think that queer things are exciting in the least, and has dreadfully strict views about boiled eggs and bread and butter being the only proper food for growing children.

"Oh, Maggie!" I said. "*Do* you see that little darling pie? It is a chicken pie. Oh do let's have it!"

"Na," Maggie said — Maggie generally talks a little Scottish — "I'd never trust 'em. Cats in it, I dare say. They're all French or Roossians or Eyetalians, or some such doings, in these parts."

Maggie does not really think that there

is any difference between different kinds of foreigners. And she was just as firm about the jelly roll and a nice puffy kind of thing with cream inside, but I was firm about the buns, and had them.

Beyond this station we went in a different train, the engine of which burnt wood instead of coal. The journey still was almost all through woods, but going higher and higher, among bigger and bigger wooded mountains on all sides. The little train whisked across sharp valleys which dropped away below you so suddenly it made you gasp, on spider-legged trestles that did not seem half big enough to hold you. I scrambled from one window to another, pressing my nose against the window-panes, and once stood on the back platform holding tight to the rail and gasping a little, with the conductor, who was the brakeman too, a nice man with gray curly hair, while Maggie took a nap; but she woke up and

snatched me back in short shape, and I think nearly boxed the nice conductor's ears.

It was dark when we came at last to the big lake. There was still a little yellow light glimmering over the water from the black shore, and we could just make out the huge dark shapes of nearer mountains, with forests up to their tops.

The lake is fifty miles long, and all in solid forest. There was a little puffing steamer waiting to take us up it, and we went on board with only the last light from the yellow crescent moon low over the dark woods. After that there was only the glow from our engine, flashing up bright whenever the engineer opened the door.

We were the only passengers. The engineer was a nice kind jolly man with sandy hair, and he showed me all about the engines, which ran so smoothly and oilily, in their patch of warm bright

light in the black darkness. Presently the engineer got supper, coffee and baked beans, on a little bench, and he and the captain took turns eating and steering, only first they brought us each a nice hot steaming plate, and Maggie liked hers as much as I did mine.

It was entirely night now, and had clouded, so that you could not see the stars at all. It was wonderful to be going on in the dark with the forests close all round us, and the great lake, dark gray water, stretching out ahead.

I wrote a letter to Billy in the light of the engine-room fire and then sat quietly in the stern with Maggie.

Maggie is really dear to travel with, though she is strict. She made a nest of the different cloaks and wraps which we had brought and tucked me warmly up beside her in them. I put my head on her knee, and she took one of my hands, a thing she does not often do, for she says

" Girls are easy sp'ilt," and sat with her bonnet on one side, telling me about Scotland, and as it grew later, of when she was a little girl herself there.

CHAPTER V

THE WATER JOURNEY

THE carry is most wonderful. It is cut right through the solid forest, a straight narrow pathway of white sand, and the trees are like a wall on each side of it. We saw it first by starlight, but then all that you could see was the black trees reaching up into the sky.

We slept in a *mill*, the nicest funny place, just at the near end of the carry, in the woods. The engineer said he had been pleased to meet us, as if I had been grown up as well as Maggie, as he helped us down. He stood looking back at us as the little steamer puffed away again in the darkness.

"Well, thanks be, it's *clean*," said Maggie, sniffing at the smell of new wood as we got down from the boat. It *was* clean. It was all new cut wood, a sawmill, with one end fitted up into two or three small rooms, all bright and white and light.

It was ten o'clock and after when we got there, but the lamp-light from the window ran out in long yellow beams into the darkness and showed the fir-trees growing close around. The kind, round-cheeked wife of the sawmill-man had a second nice hot supper for us though it was so late. We had baked beans and hot biscuits, cheese and tea, which Maggie would have said would be my death at home, out of such nice thick shiny white china, on a table made of new-cut smooth-planed boards.

It was all fresh wood everywhere, and smelled of it, especially our little closet bedroom, where we slept in *bunks*. We

had a window with no glass, open to the stars, and I could see them shining as I lay in bed. In the morning as soon as I looked out, I wished that I could have slept in the great sawdust pile outside the window. It has little thick dark fir-trees growing close around it, and you can look down the north bay of the Great Lake, which we had come up last night, long and narrow, with towering dark wooded sides; but Maggie of course would never have allowed it.

The house-mill was all in different stories, like little decks, and I do hope that sometime I can live on one just like it.

Almost before light we heard calls, and there were the two guides, Tom and Jerry Mills, who had been sent to meet us.

I cannot imagine now that I did not always know them. At first I liked Tom best, but that was because I did not know Jerry yet. Tom is a dear, nice, kind

and bluff and hearty, but Jerry is a *darling*.

At first I thought that he was a sad person, and a little queer. I wondered whether he was one of the hunters or one of the lumbermen in camp. He did not look especially like either, being tall and stooping with a long sandy mustache. I asked him what he did in camp and he sighed and said he played the organ, but more generally the flute. I thought then that he was very queer indeed, till I looked up, and he looked down at me with a nice, kindly twinkle.

Afterwards he sighed again and told Maggie he would be frank, he was the camp's chief culinary officer, and then seeing me looked puzzled, he patted my shoulder, and said that I must get used to his way of joking, that that meant he was the cook.

"The best cook," he said, "in the United States or Canada, and my brother

Tom cleans knives for me, and washes up the dishes," and Tom reached round and smacked him with a paddle.

Then we all walked together across the carry. As I said, it is dark, with woods like a close wall. The forest goes I suppose for almost countless miles away on each side of it, and I could not help thinking that if you only had clean bright fur, instead of clothes, how you could slip away and climb and run through it.

At the other side of the carry, in the still forest river, the canoes were waiting for us. I felt my heart *jump* actually when I saw them. It was still very early morning, five o'clock, and we were to go all day in them through the great woods!

Maggie jumped too, but in a very different way.

"Save and preserve us!" she said, "and is it go in the like of that, let alone this precious child! I'll never do it!" But when she saw how prettily and

safely the dear canoe floated with me and Jerry in it, she got in, only turning round to say to Tom that it would not be worth his while to try to drown her, " For I tell ye I can swim like any trout."

Our baggage, cloaks and shawls and rolls of wraps, was arranged so as to make a sort of nest of cushions for us for the journey ahead, and then with a quick swirl of paddles we set out.

We went all day long, and all the next day and the next, along the still, still river through the forest. It did not change, but went on, sometimes curving and sometimes straight, like a water road leading on into the heart itself of the great woods.

A muskrat on a tussock of grass, eating mussels very fast and going off with a flounce when he heard our paddles:

A string of silly black and yellow turtles basking on a log:

Two moose drinking: (One was at

dusk, and we stole down close to him, a tall, dark, hairy, awful beast who turned and crashed off through the woods with a great snuff and snort.)

Deer and deer, just like in Robin Hood, sometimes glancing through the woods or swimming across with their darling pretty heads held well above the water; and once a mother deer and a speckled baby fawn:

These are the things we saw as we went past, and I am almost sure I saw a bear, or heard him. It was at the little cabin where we spent the second night. He snuffed long dreadful snuffs under the door, and I am sure I saw him in the shadow of a tree. Tom said it was only a shadow that I saw, and Jerry said so too, and perhaps a bear would not have stayed there quite so still, but I could not help thinking about it after the lantern was put out, and Maggie kept her bonnet on all night.

The camp was on a lake into which the river opens after winding through so many miles of woods. It was long, long after dark when we reached it on the fourth day, in fact nearly midnight.

We had supper on shore that evening in a little hollow shiny with pine-needles, with a fire to make the coffee with, and I had coffee out of a tin cup like the men, and Maggie let me. After supper, when we were back in the canoes, I began to grow sleepy, watching the dark woods slip by us quietly, and then sleepier and sleepier, so that I hardly knew when Tom arranged the blankets for me on the floor of the canoe, and I lay down and went sound, sound asleep.

I woke up once or twice and could see the stars high over my head between the dark tree-tops, and hear the water lapping almost close to my cheek, and feel the canoe slipping along with steady, even strokes. About the fourth time I woke up more

completely, for Tom had called to me. We were just coming out at last into the lake, and far down it Tom showed me the light of a fire like a low yellow star close to the water, and said that was the camp. Before long, as we went on, Jerry gave a long halloo, and so did Tom, and we heard a far-away answer down the lake. Then we saw more lights moving back and forth, and it seemed as if the next thing I knew the canoe was being run up on a little beach and Papa caught me out of it.

Imagine, when you had never been in anything but in a house all your life! There were two great fires, so bright they almost dazzled you, blazing through the trees, and lantern light coming and going like fire-flies. There were white tents, with the light flickering on them, and a lantern hung on a tree by every tent. Mamma took me in her arms, laughing at me because I was so sleepy, and held me with her arms close round

me, and talked to Maggie, who still had her best bonnet on one side and was feeling for her apron-strings, which she always does when she is flustered, whether she has any apron on or not.

I think I really was asleep all through. Some one brought me something hot and very good in a bowl, and I thought it was Miss Burnett, who was of course at home. I heard Maggie say:

"The child's perished on her feet, Miss Flora, after travelling the wild woods these two weeks past."

(Maggie calls Mamma and me both Miss Flora always.)

The next thing I knew I was in my white towel wrapper and rolled up in I do not know how many bright red blankets, and had hardly time to wonder whether my soft, soft thick bed was really made of Christmas trees or not before I was asleep.

CHAPTER VI

THE CAMP

In the morning I felt the sweet green fir tips close against my cheek, and saw the sunlight flickering through the leaves on to my tent as I lay looking up at it. The straight stems of the trees were close outside, the leafy underbrush beyond, and through them a strip of blue lake dancing in the sun.

I pressed my face in different places into the soft sweet fir, and ran my fingers deep down into it. It was like lying in a nest of Christmas trees.

I did hope that Maggie had not brought quite as many washing things as she thinks suitable for a young lady, but she

had, and came in soon with a pail of nearly boiling water and the collapsible rubber tub. Afterwards I was allowed to go for a swim every day in the early morning, but Maggie still scrubbed me just as thoroughly, for she said:

"Swimming about like a wild fish is not hot water, nor yet nail-brushes nor soap."

Billy, once when Maggie was washing him, *collapsed the tub*, and the soapy water fell all out over the nursery floor. I wanted Maggie to put pine-needles into this bath, a thing they sometimes do for sick people, but she only said:

"Na, sticky stuff," and washed my hair more thoroughly.

I shall be glad when I am able to shampoo my own hair. I think I could do it now, and then need not have so much soap in my eyes and down my neck, but I do not believe Maggie will ever trust me till after I am grown up and married.

The moment I was dressed and fresh and tidy, I slipped out.

" But softly, so as not to wake your Ma and Pa," Maggie whispered after me.

It was still early morning. The leaf mould under my feet smelt moist and sweet. There were little veils and wisps of white mist still on the lake, just lighted up with sun, and the soft blue showed through them.

There were seven white tents in among the trees, four by one camp-fire, three farther off by the other fire for the men. The men were up already cooking breakfast and I saw the sunlight flash on Jerry's bright pans. I went down very softly to the lake.

It was perfectly different from seeing it at night. Now it was all blue and softly flashing diamonds. A duck was sitting still out on the water, tucking down his head to preen his feathers. The fog still lay in white curls all around, and where

it rose the sunlight turned the soft curls into silver.

From the tents a long narrow rocky point runs out into the lake, and I went out along this. There are not many trees on it, a few delightful gnarled and twisted Norway pines, hemlocks and cedars, and thick blueberry and huckleberry bushes, and then rock, running off bare and smooth into deep water, and already feeling quite warm in the sun.

Beyond it is the lake, which is so long that the other end loses itself in a sort of misty gateway between two high sharp blue mountains. There are many different fairy wooded islands, and the tall forest comes straight down to the water all the way along. It is *all* woods. They stretch away as far as you can see without a change or break.

It was perfectly still, and very warm and sunny, and a little breath of wind seemed to come from the shadow of the

tall woods on one side and stir across the lake. It seemed all bright and happy and alive; but as if it belonged entirely to itself and to the forest, as if no people could ever come to touch or hurt it, and there would never be any voice across it but deer and wild birds calling to each other.

I climbed out to the very end rock of all, and was reaching down for foam cups which had washed in between the rocks, when I heard Papa call " Breakfast ! " in a nice loud roar.

I scrambled back just as Mamma was coming out of her tent. She had a sprig of scarlet berries in her hair, and had on pretty fringed and beaded moccasins. The fires had fresh wood on, and were burning with a bright rush of sparks, and the air was full of the nice smell of hot coffee and breakfast.

The dining-room tent had two great logs for benches, a funny thin board table

running between them, and was open at both ends, so that you could see both fires. The sharp air tickled me and made me hungry. We had fresh trout, fresh that very morning, hot and sizzling, and nice hot baked potatoes, flapjacks, cocoa, and little biscuit, all out of pretty bright aluminum cups and bowls and plates. I afterwards on my birthday had a little aluminum knife, fork, and spoon, which folded into a case to go in my pocket.

"Well, Flora!" Papa said, when I had finished with a sigh, and folded my red napkin.

"Well, *Papa!*" I said, and hugged him and he hugged me.

Afterwards, when he had gone off with the men for the rest of the day, measuring trees along one of the trails, Mamma and I went and put my tent in order (Maggie was unpacking in her own tent with a great flapping and banging and shaking

out of clothes). We folded the blankets neatly on the green bed and then hung my hat and jacket and frocks up on the spikes of the cedar tent-posts. My tooth-brush hung up too, and my sponge and looking-glass. We arranged the smaller things on a shelf made of a single monstrous fungus which Papa had put up for me. I also had two slices of a big tree, one for a wash-stand, the other either for a chair or table.

Afterwards Mamma went to her tent and in a minute came back laughing with her hands behind her back.

"Which hand?" she said.

I said "Right," and in her right hand was a pair of moccassins just like her own for me, with pretty leather fringes and a bright pattern of porcupine quills worked on the toes. In her left hand she had a little scarlet sweater, and a scarlet cap with a white feather in it. Mamma and I both wear scarlet a great deal, being so dark.

"I wanted a green jacket for you," she said, "for proper fairy clothes, 'green jacket, red cap, and white owl's feather,' but I had to do with this. And here is one thing more, which Papa meant to give you after breakfast."

Oh, what do you think it was! A leather belt, carved, with a real sheath-knife fitting into it!

"Now fly," Mamma said, kissing me, "and explore a little, while I write to Billy, my poorest mumpy lamb; then come back and we'll be cosy by the fire. To-morrow, lessons, a short one every day, but to-day is holiday."

I had not thought there would be lessons at all. I went first to Jerry's cooking fire, to where he was prodding lovely round white doughnuts as they rose bubbling to the top of the pan. He was singing a song about "Alone in the grave," but he was singing it extremely gaily.

"'MISSY!' HE SAID, 'AND COME AND CALL ON JEREMIAH'S DOUGHNUTS!'"

"If here isn't Missy!" he said, with a low bow, "and come and call on Jeremiah's doughnuts!"

"What makes them rise to the top, Jerry?" I said.

"Well," he said, "they never care about staying at the bottom. Call it frivolous minded, or ambitious, I don't know. Take good hard tack, 'twould set there all day long."

"But hard tack wouldn't make doughnuts," I objected.

"No more it would," he said.

"What are the birds, Jerry?" I asked him afterwards. I had noticed them as soon as I got up in the morning, gray birds, smooth and sleek, and quite big, which flew quietly down close to the tents, and sat there watching us, as tame as doves.

"Meat-birds," he said, "Canada jays, to call them full and proper. The sauciest thieves ever was hatched out of aigs.

Steal my doughnuts right hot out of the pan, that feller'd like to."

But though they were saucy and though they certainly stole I loved the nice gray quiet soft-flying birds, and loved having them so close about us always.

Jerry made me a seat of boxes piled together, and we had a nice talk about everything in camp. I told him how much more wonderful it was even than I had dreamt.

" It's wonderful indeed," straightening himself, and now not joking at all, " and more than wonderful besides. Here you see things the way they really are. Get the sweet, clean breath of the woods once into your blood and it's with you. You never can lose it again. It's with you in an elevated train, I can't say worse, and you won't lose it, not in a smallpox hospital."

Soon Maggie came for me to come and mend my stockings, and Jerry pretended

that he should die of loneliness while we were gone.

"Pass right away," he said, "maybe before this batch of doughnuts is finished, maybe not, you never *can* tell," and he told Maggie not to blind her lovely eyes with weeping for him.

There are three rocks around the camp-fire, by Mamma's tent, one a great big split one; you can climb up the crack and lie on the top looking right down into the fire. Then there are two smaller ones together, which make a sort of throne or armchair for Mamma and were kept filled with soft fir, and a long flat table one where we had dinner often. Mamma and I sat here till dinner-time, talking about Billy and my visit and the journey to camp.

CHAPTER VII

IN MY TENT AT NIGHT

"MAMMA," I said, sitting on my bed while Mamma brushed out my hair, "Mamma, why couldn't Mr. Charles come up and be with us here too in camp?"

My hair is so long and slippery and thick that I cannot do it very well myself. Mamma's was done already, and hung in two long dark plaits down her back.

"Oh, Mamma!" I said, getting excited as soon as I began to think about it, "do have him, please! Why not? Just think how ill and white he is there, lying still all by himself, and in a city, too, so much more horrid! Oh think! And if

he was here he might get better and better every minute!"

"But he is ill, my dear — don't jump so, you are tangling your hair — ill and lame as well. How could he take such a long trying journey? It would be good for him, surely. I do not see how it could help doing him a world of good, but alas, how could we ever manage it? It would take wings, or at the least of it a flying carpet. I wrote him, after he had been so good to you and to your James, and had a delightful whimsical answer in return, just like what he used to be like when I used to know him. — Certainly nothing could be more delightful than to have him here." —

"But he does travel!" I said, jumping up and down more still. "He has travelled, when he could hardly move, too, Hannah told me. John, the chore-man — and John is so nice — was run over by some people in an automobile. His leg

was broken, and he was in bed, and he has five little children, and Hannah says doctor's bills do beat the world in Boston. The people who ran over him said it was John who was drunk, and Mr. Charles had himself carried down and into the court and testified, and the people had to pay money instead of John, and Mr. Charles made them go to see John in the hospital and tell him they were sorry. And they went, and gave John's oldest boy a watch and all of them boots and shoes, because Mr. Charles told them they had behaved like sneaks. Oh Mamma! And he could sleep in a tent, and oh how he would love it! Jerry and Tom could help him, and he has his crutches, and I am sure if he had the same nice conductors that they would help him in the train."

"Don't jump so, Flora," Mamma said again. "I shall have to tie your pig-tails to the tent-pole. I wonder — I

wonder — Flora, I'll ask Papa. We'll talk and think it over thoroughly, and I don't know — I don't know — "

She gave my hand a little thoughtful squeeze.

" Oh Mamma ! " I said, " it will be so perfectly splendid ! He can sleep in a tent with the fresh air all round him, and grow strong and better every single day, and not be so white and tired any more ! I am sure I am not so thin myself already as I was last night ! This air tastes so *good* every time you breathe it. Why, he may grow as strong as Papa, and never be lame any more, and be able to walk and climb up all the mountains ! "

Mamma could not help laughing as she kissed me.

" Ah my dear," she said, " there is no chance of that. But if he could possibly undertake the journey — I can't see — I don't see — It could hardly help doing

him good when he got here. He even might get better and quite free from pain, though alas! nothing can help the pitiful lameness. I will talk it over with Papa this very night!"

The tangles were out and she braided my hair in two braids and tied them firmly with little bits of red ribbon.

"Where did you know Mr. Charles first?" I asked her.

"When he was a quick dark-haired lath of a boy of about twelve years old. He came for a Sunday with his father and mother, who died years ago. You see they were cousins of ours though not near ones, although we have not seen Charles now for so many years. I first saw him early in the morning, before breakfast. He had slid down the gutter-spout, which I was then very fond of doing myself, and was turning somersaults like a watch-spring all over the lawn. He was the most delightful boy I ever saw. That

was why I was so very glad for you to know him."

I lay down and curled up in my blankets, and she tucked them smooth and close, and kissed me, and blew out the light.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FIRST DAY IN CAMP

THE very next day it rained. I woke up hearing the rain pattering and drumming on my tent, and outside there was a gray sheet of it pouring down. There was a big clear black puddle in the leaf mould outside, which was soaking into the moss and spreading out bigger and bigger, and little streams were running into other puddles all about the camp. The tree trunks were dark and wet, with the moss and lichens showing bright on them.

"Go in out of the wet, Miss Flora child!" Maggie screamed at me from the doorway of her tent.

It was so delightful looking out at the

rain that I had forgotten that I had only my towel wrapper on and was standing with my bare feet on the nice wet moss.

The rain poured down. I could see Tom carrying great wet logs to keep the fire up, in yellow oilskins and long rubber boots. I dressed standing on my log dressing-table, to keep my stockings dry.

Mamma came for me in a long cloak with a hood over her dark hair, which she wrapped round us both, and we ran together to the dining-room tent.

Mamma let us have hot coffee because it was so damp, and I drank it, with my fingers red and wet with rain. It was very jolly. Papa was dressed in oilskins too, and rubber boots, and there were rain-drops all over his hair and beard and running down his clothes.

Two of the men were going for the mail, and they came for Papa's letters, all wrapped up in oilskins and sou'-

westers and great rubber boots, with the rain running off of them in little rivers.

"Don't rush it, though," Papa called after them, "better put up at the Forks if it keeps on like this, or you will be swimming about in the canoe before night."

I wanted to go out to see them start and to wade in the different puddles, which were now getting very deep, with clear dark streams flowing from one to another. Papa put his oilskin jacket on me, which reached nearly to my ankles, and tied it round me with a leather strap. He then put his great big rubber boots on me, or rather lifted me up and put me into them. They were the very heavy kind of rubber and I was only just able to swing them by taking the longest and most swinging step I could. If I could have hopped I should have got on more easily in one.

Jerry was very cheerful. I found out afterwards that he always was particularly gay when it was raining or if there was anything dismal going on. He was cooking, getting ready what he called a "partridge smother," and had an umbrella with its handle down the back of his neck, and looked so funny.

He said "Good morning" and then "Where might them little shoes be carrying Missy to this morning?"

"Oh Jerry," I said, "you never saw things weigh so much in all your life, and they are perfectly enormous. Are you very busy? Can you come down with me and watch Tom start in the canoe?"

"Can I accompany a beautiful young lady! As Hamlet says, 'Now what a way to talk!' Though as for seeing Tom start I don't know as that's what you'd call a lovely sight. You wait till I finish these potatoes and I'll be there!"

He finished his potatoes, which he was cutting up in little pieces and then put his umbrella handle down his neck again.

"Invention of my own," he said, "leaves my hands free and my mind unclouded. Useful, and they tell me, so becoming; and the government won't give me any patent on it."

The rain was hissing on the lake and coming in quick gray curtains, chasing each other fast and fast across it.

"Oh *do* wait till to-morrow!" I could not help saying as I saw them going down with the canoe, "you cannot even *see* if it pours on you like this, and you will get so soaked all through and through."

A man with a long mustache named Mr. Sawyers was going to paddle in the stern, Tom in the bow. The mail, their dinner and supper and Tom's rifle, were all wrapped up in a rubber blanket and oilskins, and put up snugly in the bow

of the canoe. They laughed at my saying they would get too wet, and Tom's wet sunburnt face and white teeth looked so nice and cheerful in the rain.

"A little wet
Is what you get,"

Jerry sang to them, and then said:

"May your feet never lack water to grow in," to Tom (his feet really are enormous), and Tom said:

"So long, old horse, and don't weep too long for me if you fall in," and then pushed off, and soon they were only a speck in the gray rain far up on the lake.

"Washin' day for the trees," Jerry said as we splashed back to camp, and showed me where they had their *soap*, little piles of foam in the puddles at the foot of the trees.

"Dryin' day to-morrow, if the wind comes round, and then ironin', and then fresh as Missy's cheeks here in the rain."

It was one of the nicest days we had at all. Mamma's tent was warm and dry and cosy, and the big fire outside burned well, though of course it smoked and sputtered.

I had on, not my moccassins, but some little soft moccassin-slippers called " Old-town moccassins " and Papa had on the same, and Mamma had her pretty bronze kid slippers as if she was at home. She had on her scarlet wrapper with a cord round her waist, for she had got her long hair wet with running out in the rain and had to let it all down, like an Indian princess.

Papa was very busy with papers, measuring with compasses and adding up figures, and Mamma and I had lessons.

" If A walk three miles while B is walking two miles and a half " was the kind of example we were having, but every little while Papa would lean across and hand us one like this:

"If Jerry fries ninety-seven griddle-cakes this morning (but he is much too lazy) and Flora eats forty-seven as usual, Mamma three and Papa one and a half, how many does that leave for Maggie's breakfast?"

And when a little later we were having cubic contents, which is a dreadfully hard thing to understand, he listened very carefully. Mamma was explaining how a whole lot of little cubes make up the big one and Papa presently said:

"Like this," and gravely handed us an example, but it was a picture of a great black cat and a pointer dog, with "Find cubic contents of Cat and divide by Dog" written underneath.

Mamma sent me to Maggie's tent under a big umbrella to do my sewing, for she thought Maggie might be feeling rather lonely, but I might have spared my pains, for she was in a most tremendous fit of dusting and cleaning.

There is not so very much to clean in a tent, but she was going over it with hot soap-suds and water.

She made me sit on her table (which I could only do by sitting cross-legged) so as to be out of the way.

" Oh Maggie," I said laughing, " don't you think the rain is making things clean enough already? My face feels clean as a rubber sponge or as a bath towel."

" Miss Flora " said Maggie, stopping with her cloth in her hand (she did look very funny, with Jerry's sou'wester on, which he had lent her, for " the latest thing in sweeping caps ").

" What is the chief great good that man, under Providence, has added to this natural world of ours? " and without waiting for me to answer, —

" Soap," she said, and went on still more thoroughly scrubbing and cleaning.

Late in the afternoon (after Maggie had gone to the kitchen tent, and told

Jerry she would not mind seeing to his pots and pans, which were quite clean already), the rain stopped, and after sunset the clouds broke away in the northwest. They were still heavy and dark overhead, and the water was dark and was beginning to crisp up with the clearing-off wind, but in the break sunset color showed, and lighted up the water in a bright streak.

"Better make all fast to-night Jerry," Papa called, after we had been out on the point watching the last light and the dark sky, "we shall have a blow I fancy before morning."

Jerry was still meditating and shaking his head over his kitchen tent, which Maggie had put into a perfectly terrible tidiness.

"Oh, woman, in thine hours of ease,"

he said sorrowfully,

"Oh what a state of things is these!"

I went to bed at eight, which is still my bed-time. Papa lighted my lantern for me, and then came in while Mamma was tucking me up to see that the ropes of the tent were all made tight and fast. It was blowing a strong breeze already, though in the woods we could not feel it much, only hear it through the trees over our heads. A tent looks bright and safe in the lantern light.

CHAPTER IX

JAMES COMES

I THINK it must have been the middle of the night when I was waked up hearing hurrying feet outside. Everything was in a wild roar of wind, the tent flies were flapping and cracking, and from the point came the crash of short waves, beating crisp and fierce against the rocks. It was such a whirl of noise that I could not at first think where I was or what was happening, but I heard quick voices, and then heavy feet running up from the point, and then Papa's voice asking what was wrong.

" Canoe upset, sir ! " some one shouted, " went over trying to work past the point,

L OF C.

and they're afraid there is a young boy drowned."

If I had known then who the young boy was!

I suddenly began to feel queer and shaking, and just then my tent flap opened with a gust of wind and rain, and Mamma came quickly in in her scarlet wrapper, and sat down by me on my bed.

"We can't do anything at all," she said, "sweetheart," taking my hands in hers, "only sit quiet and wait; only we know that Papa will do just the right thing, and he has nice Jerry and Tom and all the others to help him."

She put her arms close round me and I put mine round her and put my head in her lap to keep out some of the wild dreadful sound of wind. We could hear dear Maggie singing Scotch hymns in the next tent.

I cannot quite bear even now to hear

how Papa and the men went out into the water to their waists, and helped two men ashore and an overturned canoe; and then how in the darkness Papa made out something dark drifting and disappearing in the fierce gray and white whirl and confusion of waves, and how though the men shouted to him to let them go instead, he swam out, pushing a piece of cedar log in front of him, and then just as he thought he had lost sight of the dark thing he felt cold fingers, and a boy's voice said, gasping and choked with water:

"May I hold on with you? I'm all right if I can just manage to hold on for a minute."

If I had heard too, I should have known of course whose voice it was; but the first thing that I heard was a great shout of "All right!" and cheering, and I suddenly felt myself laughing all over, though with my head still in

Mamma's lap, and Mamma leaned down and kissed me. Then we heard them all come tramping back and saw the lantern light, and some one said:

"Please put me down, sir! Thanks simply awfully! I'm all right, honestly!"

"Oh, mother, it is *James*," I said, "James Auchinbreck!"

If I was surprised James was at least as much so, if not more.

"Why, Flora!" was all that he could say as soon as he could speak, and then again, "Why, *Flora!*"

It was the middle of the night and after, but Mamma let me come with her to the fire and sit by, wondering if I was dreaming or if we were bewitched, while we watched James having hot supper and getting warmed and toasted through and through. The wind was not so strong, though still coming in gusts, and the clouds had blown away clear leaving the stars out bright.

"'PLEASE PUT ME DOWN, SIR!'"

James's teeth were chattering with cold and wetness when he first came in, but Papa had put dry things on him, and made him put on his great dog-skin jacket lined with fur. He looked just the same, only that he was very brown and had grown taller, and he was hungrier than any one I ever have seen.

It was of course too late to talk much, but he told us between spoonfuls of hot tea and partridge soup a little about what had happened, while his two guides, who as I have said got ashore all right by themselves, were being made warm and comfortable too by Jerry's fire.

He said that he had been with his father, on their geological expedition in the middle of Canada, when his father had suddenly been called away to go much farther north, far up into Alaska.

"It is a pretty dangerous trip," James said. "Over a mountain range that hasn't been explored at all yet. I do

hope he's all right. Of course I couldn't go," he went on ruefully, " I can't until I'm older — though I'm growing — and the only thing for me to do seemed to be to come down to Aunt Louisa's — Mrs. Mixter's — at Newport. I told Father I would, and that I would try hard to behave while I was there. We had been working east anyhow, and had got a good way down, and Father decided to send me back this way with the guides, who were going home by canoe. It isn't a long trip. We started yesterday to come down your lake. We wanted to get on and through to the Forks by morning, as we had to lose lots of time from low water farther back up in the woods. We were coming down under the lee of the shore, and didn't I suppose realize quite how bad the wind was out on the lake. Father trusts these guides, Pierre and Le Loup, like anything, and I do think we should have got through all right, but just as

we had worked past the point, — where we meant to stop if we might, seeing your light, for shelter, — we struck a water-logged stump — it wasn't a rock, I'm sure — and then went over."

Then James did what I think was a brave thing to do. He got bright red, the way he does, and then said rather quickly to Papa, but looking straight up at him:

"Thank you most awfully, sir, for saving my life."

And Papa said hastily:

"That's all right," and shook hands and began talking right off about something else.

In the morning you would never have dreamt that there had been a storm at all. I lay still, looking out, wondering how it could have been so wild and raging, in such a rush and whirl of rain and strong wind, and only such a little while before. The sky was blue and the

sun soft and bright. The tree-trunks showed black and wet among the leaves, and every leaf and twig looked freshly washed. Off in the forest near a white-throated sparrow was singing. There was the wet sweet smell of woods after a rain, and clear puddles stood all about in the leaf mould, but that was all left of the great storm. Everything was smiling.

James was up already. He was standing on the end rock of the point, shielding his eyes with his hands against the sun.

" There ! " he said, pointing to a round black end of a log a good way out in the lake, " Flora, do you see ? That is what tipped us over. I knew it wasn't a rock ! "

Then he said " Good morning," and " What a corking place this is that you are in," and said he hoped Mamma and Papa had not minded " having such a tremendous fuss and rumpus in the middle of the night."

"Of course we could not help it," he said, "but it is horrid to be waked up, in such a storm too, and they both were corking."

He said the guides were all right, that they had slept in Tom's and Jerry's blankets, and that they were up now, and had got the canoe hauled up by Jerry's fire and were patching it, and that it wasn't hurt so much as he had been afraid.

"I suppose we shall have to go on this afternoon," he went on ruefully. "This place is so nice and every one has been so perfectly corking."

I asked him where Thérèse was, and he said she had gone back to take care of girls again in France.

"Which of course," he said, "is really all she is good for. Aunt Louisa had her to keep up my French accent and my manners, which you know are really both better than her own. I made

up my mind that I would stand her and not bother Father for a year anyhow, and then he came back and saw her and she went."

James is the most unconceited boy I ever saw, but he knows perfectly well the things which he is good at.

I asked him if Mrs. Mixter's house at Newport was like the one at Boston.

"No" he said, laughing a little, "not as bad as that, at least not quite. There is the sea, you know, and I can be out sailing. But it will be pretty bad too, I'm afraid. People keep coming, and I have to go for drives, and there are butlers and footmen. The only real comfort is the way Aunt Louisa will look when she sees my clothes, for all my good ones are out there in the pond. I oughtn't to speak like this about her, of course, but she only is my aunt after all by marriage, and she has been horrid, or tried to be, to Father."

He looked down at his clothes complacently. He had on a leather-colored shirt and khaki trousers. They looked like a young Indian's clothes, a young chief's, but they certainly would not be Mrs. Mixter's idea of what was proper.

Mamma at breakfast was what Papa calls "bristling with ideas." Her eyes were very bright. After breakfast she took Papa down to the beach and walked up and down with him talking something over. Coming back they passed my tent, and I could not help hearing what they were saying.

"A boy, my dear, at Louisa Mixter's house! At Newport too! He would be fretted to death with stiffness and nagging. This boy seems to be his father over again, nice and able and quiet, with the twinkle inside — I like a lad with quiet, thoughtful manners; and he looks as if he would grow up to have his father's power. Harry, he'd *die!*"

Then she saw me and came into my tent.

"Flora," she said, "I have waked up this morning with I think such a beautiful idea. I like your James lad very much indeed, and so does Papa. He ought to be a fine boy, being his father's son. It will be delightful for you, and Billy, when he comes, to have him for a playmate, and it will be too perfectly horrid for the boy at that ill-tempered — at his aunt's at Newport. She does not it seems know yet of his coming. And our plan is this: to send the guides on this afternoon again — they were only to go with him to where he takes the steamer — and then write his aunt and father that we shall keep him here unless we hear from them to the contrary. Now don't you think . . ." But I was so excited and delighted I hardly could think at all.

When she told James he could do nothing at all at first but get bright red and stammer all over with pleasure.

"Oh" he said, "oh it would be too perfectly corking, of course! You are awfully nice! I should like it better than anything else in the world. This is the nicest place I think I ever saw. But do you think that you honestly — Aunt Louisa says I am really a —" and then he looked up and met Mamma's eyes, and then smiled his nice grave smile and they shook hands.

Mrs. Mixter, when letters had had time to reach her, did not mind at all ("of course, in fact, she really is awfully pleased" James said to me), and so James came to live with us at camp.

He fished up his own shelter-tent from the pond, having marked the place where he thought they had tipped over, and also, to his intense relief, his rifle and his fishing-rod. He dove for all of them. The last time he went down he came up red and out of breath with a dripping bundle of black clothes.

" This is my Eton suit," he said, when he had brought it ashore and dropped it on the rocks, a dripping black sop. " And now I really can't ever wear it again. Aunt Louisa never will believe that I am years too big for them. It was she who made me pack them; and I hate to bother Father about anything like clothes."

Mamma spread them on the rock to dry and they looked very queer. He certainly can never wear them again.

I forgot to say that he also found most of his blankets. Mamma laughed till she cried when he came up with the end of a long red one in his mouth, and as he brought them in she spread them out on the warm rocks to dry, with stones to hold them down. Just about then I went in too, from reaching out too far from the end rock, and Mamma let me stay and swim a little even with all my clothes on, though Maggie scolded us both.

James had lessons with us every morning. He sat cross-legged, whittling a chain, while Mamma gave me my arithmetic and my geography — Syria and those countries we were having — and afterwards while she read "Wing and Wing" aloud. He also did some lessons by himself, geometry — imagine — and a set of maps which he was drawing. He wanted to get ahead so as to be able as soon as possible to go on with his father. He asked Papa if he would mind helping and explaining things to him, and Papa told Mamma that he was very quick with mathematics, and drew beautifully.

All this time the kaleidoscope was turning, and we never knew it, until one evening a week or ten days afterwards, when we had climbed out after supper on the point to where the rocks made a sort of armchair for a giant, to watch the sunset and to wait for the canoes with Tom and two of the others bringing back

the mail. The sky was all a pure clear primrose color with the black woods below it. The lake seemed wide and lonely, and as if the woods might stretch around the world. The yellow light spread down the water, which was very still, and just as we were watching a late string of sheldrake came scattering along it, breaking up the shadows. Soon afterwards I saw two black specks far down the lake, and at the same minute James said, "There are the canoes."

They came in just as we heard Papa's voice, coming back along the trail. The letters were in a little oilskin package to keep them from the wet. We sat round the fire, with fire and lantern light to read them by, and at the first one, which was from the place where Billy was staying, Mamma said suddenly:

"*Harry!*"

And Papa said "Great Cæsar!"

Billy had come down with scarlet

fever, though not badly, and Aunt Eleanor, who, as I have said, is Papa's only sister, had broken her shoulder by a fall from her horse.

There certainly was not much time to think of anything. Maggie, as soon as Mamma had told her, went to work packing, flapping and shaking the clothes out like a cyclone. James went quietly to work to help Papa, and Papa said nothing at all, but smoked and seemed to be thinking very hard.

Maggie will never so much as think of letting me pack anything.

"Run along do, Miss Flora, child, and don't be fretting me nor your Mamma. Here's the entirety to be packed, and all inside the minute."

I went down to where Jerry was polishing his shining pails and kettles by the cooking fire. Papa had told him.

"Oh, Jerry," I said, "and we all have to go away!"

I felt suddenly as if I could not keep from crying. It did not seem as if we *could* go. It all looked so cheerful, Jerry's little tin kitchen, with the biscuit getting brown and crisp inside it, and smelling so good, and the fire and all the tin things shining and bright.

Jerry was so funny, and so dear and comforting. He stopped singing about "The Wave and the Grave," and looked down at me with his head on one side. I could not help it, my throat felt sore and my eyes were full of tears, and when I laughed and shook my head two of them fell splash on the front of my frock.

Jerry reached out and patted my shoulder with his big hand.

"Now Missy," he said, "what you want to do is to cheer right up this minute. You see the lake out there? Well now it ain't going to dry up nor fly away, nor yet the woods and islands. They've been here quite a spell, one thing

with another, and I shouldn't be a mite surprised when you come up next year, if you was to find them setting right here still. I expect to be just about as well and lovely too myself, next year, and the first thing you know you'll be standing right by that same handsome cracker-box, watching biscuit pretty near as beautiful as them (they say you can't have *perfection*, only once) a-rising in that very same old pan."

"Oh Jerry," I said, patting him, "you are so nice!" And he bowed and said:

"Not having my op'ry hat on I can't take it off, not even when a lady makes me compliments," and he patted my shoulder again and then began beating up his flapjack batter.

CHAPTER X

TROUT FISHING

THERE is a trout brook that comes tumbling down from one of the forest mountains, only about half a mile up the trail, through the thickest and most mighty woods I ever saw. It comes white, white and foaming in little bright fierce cataracts, down and down over and between huge moss-grown rocks, and then to stop and breathe fills lovely clear black pools, where the ferns, maidenhair and other kinds, fringe the rocks along the edge as thick as moss. The only trouble is that the forest meets so closely overhead that it is hard to find room to handle a fishing-rod. The trees reach up tall, high over your head, and at noon

the sunlight falls down straight between them on the shining water.

If you could have seen Maggie fishing! And the funniest part was that she should catch more fish than anybody else.

"Fished when I was a lassie, back in Scotland. Fished barefoot in the burns the livelong day, and always had my string of trouts full as the lads'."

James and I both had our shoes and stockings off before she finished speaking, and having given herself away so beautifully she could only laugh and say that she would take the stick to us, if it was not for frightening away the fish.

You see we had not gone away from camp at all. Everything had been arranged quite differently instead. Mamma and Papa had gone home to be with Billy and to help Aunt Eleanor. The lumbermen had been sent on to a different lumbering district, much farther in the west, and James and Maggie and

I, Tom, Jerry, and Mr. Sawyers were keeping camp, and Mr. Charles was coming!

"You see, my lamb," Mamma said to me the very night the word came about Billy, sitting beside me in my tent with her arms close round me, "we cannot have you catching scarlet fever. I wonder if there ever was such a chapter of accidents in the wide world before! Here is the house at home torn up from attic to cellar, so that there actually is not a corner dry from the rain, and over at the superintendent's poor Miss Burnett in bed with a strained shoulder. Aunt Eleanor, as you know, will not be able to move for weeks and weeks, and Aunt Constance is abroad, Aunt Lucy and Cousin Amy in California, and Uncle Chris down South. I believe I could go on to third and fourth cousins fourteen times removed, and not one would be in his own proper place or hers! So that

unless you and Maggie go to a summer hotel or camp out in the chicken-house or join a circus, I don't see anywhere for you to be, unless at Aunt Carey's great empty shut-up house in Boston, and that would be too utterly forlorn for you, my little one!"

"So what Papa says is this," she went on, stroking my hair, "that the place for you is right here where you are!—" I jumped at this with astonishment, but she went on quietly, holding me close to her. "You will have Tom and Jerry and your James, and Maggie, who is a match for any bears or Indians, and 'Bijah Sawyers, though I don't know that he exactly counts. Papa feels that you will be just as safe here as at home, and safer, for there are no germs nor trains nor automobiles. He has watched James carefully, and the men of course he knows; and of course there will be strict rules about your not going up the trail or on

the water alone, though for the matter of that you swim as well as a fish.

"And so that is the plan, my little one," she went on, giving me a very loving hug and kiss. "I don't know how I can manage without having fits of worries all day and all night, but if Papa says this is best, it is, and I shall have to manage. And this is what we are going to do to make it safer yet. If we can, if the doctors advise it, and he himself feels he is equal to it, and if Papa can arrange so that the journey will not be too trying and exhausting — so many ifs! — we are going to try to arrange what you first thought of, getting your Mr. Charles, Charles Wainwright, to come up and stay here for the two whole months with you!"

"Oh, Mother!" I said, giving her a hug.

"Won't it be wonderful?" she said, giving me another one. "We were going

to try, you know, in any case, and now it will help out so many difficulties. If only we can arrange it; and if we can't, why of course Papa will leave me and Aunt Eleanor to our broken backs and fevers and come straight back to you. But with Charles here with you we shall feel more than safe, for though he never took a degree he studied medicine, and though he is so crippled now, alas, alas, he knows the great woods as he does the back of his hand."

"Isn't it wonderful?" she went on, stroking my hair. "Think what it may mean to him, how much life and strength he may get in spite of his lameness."

"But you won't be here, Mamma," I said. I did not mean her to hear it, but I gave a sudden sob.

"I know, I know," she said, "but that is what we must not think about. We shall miss each other frightfully, of course, you and Papa and I, and whenever

there has been sickness before you and I have both been nurses together. But we shall write very, very often, darling, and if everything goes well, it will only be six weeks before we shall be bringing a very limp and pale Billy back with us to get strong and brown and fat and tall up here, and *then* what times we shall have here, all of us together!"

We hugged each other again, and both laughed, and both cried a little too, and then went out to Papa.

They went that very night, starting off into the black darkness of the lake, for it was cloudy, with a fresh wind blowing, and there wasn't even starlight. We watched their lantern like a yellow star out in the darkness, and swung a salute three times with ours, and they swung one back. I could not help feeling very lonely at first. It was so strange to feel that they had gone, the woods seemed nearer somehow, and more dark and tall.

Dear Maggie slept with me though, and it felt so comfortable to have her that I did not mind her snoring.

That is how it happened that James and I and Maggie were fishing in Duck Pond Brook, where it comes tumbling down from Ega and Nega, the twin mountains, just about two weeks afterward.

I do not think I have spoken yet of the tall twin mountains, but they were the most wonderful things you saw from camp, or rather from the point. They rise up dark and high straight from the lake. To the east a very long deep bay runs in to their feet, and they almost seem to overhang it, they are so steep and high and almost sheer. Toward the lake and on top they are bare dark rock, but to the east they slope away in sweeps and ridges of unbroken woods that seem endless when you get up high enough to look down on them.

Early the morning of our fishing trip James and Tom went up the trail with their hatchets to get balsam fir for Mr. Charles's bed, and after it was made we went on up to the brook. We were going to be gone all day, for James wanted to be sure that we had trout in plenty. For Mr. Charles was coming; we had heard when Tom brought the mail the night before, and though we did not know what day, we wanted everything to be ready and delightful.

"Put it thick, Flora," James said, as I was making the bed, throwing a load of fragrant stuff down from his shoulder. "Oh dear, how sticky you are getting. Never mind, it washes off all right, and Maggie will scrub you."

Then after the bed was done, and soft and thick and springy as all of us could make it, we went off on our picnic for all day.

The best place to fish was on a rock in

the middle. I chose one right between two waterfalls. It was dark green with moss and lichens, and the water swirled past on both sides of it. The spray rose cool against my face, and the pleasant thundering noise filled everything. It was just noon, and the sun came straight down between the bright green leaves high overhead.

James was on a rock in the middle, farther up. He would do nothing but cast, which he did beautifully, having had lessons in Canada from his father. His fly dropped lightly first into one little pool and then another, his reel sang, and he did not seem to be in the least bothered by the trees. Maggie was below, with a great sunbonnet tied close under her chin, fishing with a thick short pole which Jerry had cut for her, catching trout steadily, and putting back the fourth and fifth ones, which she said was common justice.

They both fished steadily, but I did all sorts of other things besides. Partly I just sat still, it was so lovely. I fished, and caught some beautiful little trout, and I also got watercresses along the rocks and ate them, and I put my bare feet into the cool swirl of water by my rock, and felt it pull at them, and wondered if they were as white as the fairies'.

We had lunch below by Maggie's rock. It was a broad flat one, with a cool cliff of black rock covered with ferns behind it for a shelter; and Jerry certainly does think of the nicest luncheons. This time we had cold partridge (though sometimes it was venison or bacon) rolled up in ferns; dates, rolled up in ferns too, jam, cold biscuit, and as we were to be by the water, where there could be no possible chance of fire catching, potatoes, which we roasted in the ashes.

Then we fished again, till by and by

the deep afternoon coolness came, and the shadow fell across the trees above. We put on our shoes and stockings, and James strung the trout on a long switch. Maggie took off her sunbonnet and unpinned her dress, and we were just wondering when Tom was coming for us, when James touched my shoulder and pointed up the brook. A stag had just come down to a pool to drink, the same pool where James was fishing before luncheon. He waded quietly in, then gave a snorting cough and put his head deep in the water and drank. Presently there was a rustling and crackling, and the pretty heads of two does showed beside him. We could see their long soft ears and gentle faces plainly. They looked out quietly, and then began to drink too, but without wading in, while the stag licked and shook himself, and then blew long puffs in the water. We sat as still as stones, hardly thinking

of breathing. At last they finished drinking, and licked each other friendlily, and the stag stood still in the water, and then he got out of it one leg at a time, and they all went quietly back into the forest, one after the other.

"Now Maggie, lovely one, we will go home," James said, and just then we heard another and much louder noise and crackling, and a cheerful voice singing, and there was Tom just come to take us back.

The way was longer than I had remembered, and the trees more huge and dark. Perhaps I was a little tired too, or sleepy with so much warmth and sunshine, for I stumbled more than once over the different fallen logs, and as we went along I suddenly felt lonely, and wished that Papa was there to help me up, and that we were going to find Mamma sitting by the fire when we got back to camp.

Tom saw though that I was stumbling, and said, "Here, hi!" and picked me up and put me on his shoulder, and James helped Maggie carefully over the bad logs and rocks. It is the very thickest part of the trail, through heavy hemlocks, and it was nearly dark before we saw the camp-fire glowing through the dark trees, and suddenly smelt the fresh wind off the lake. It cooled us in a moment. There was no sunset light, for it was cloudy and seemed to be getting ready for a storm. The clouds were low-hanging, and it felt wild and lonely. James and I went down to wash our hands while Jerry was bustling about and getting supper ready, and then climbed out on the rocks of the point to watch the darkness and the clouds until he banged the dish-pan, which was the supper gong. I was just thinking that the wind was getting shivery, when far, far down the lake we heard a long call.

James stood up, listening, and in a minute more it came again.

"It is Mr. Charles," James said, jumping off his rock, "don't you remember how he gave different loon and moose and Indian calls one morning for us? It's the same voice, and gracious! how it carries!"

"It can't be!" I said, but when the clear call came again, I felt it was. James ran back to get Tom and Jerry and the lanterns, and in a minute we were all standing on the beach together. Tom gave his famous great roar, like a bull moose, and then his high call, which Jerry calls the wildcat in a colic, but it carries very well, and this time we heard an answer. James has a call too, like an Indian's, very clear and long, and he gave it from the end of the point twice, and this time the answer came back perfectly plainly.

"A — ho — o — o — o — o!"

And Tom and James answered it again.

Every one got lanterns, and Maggie hurried back to make sure the tent was all right, though she had looked at it a dozen times already. I stood close beside Jerry, and at last we heard voices plainly, the men saying "Now! Now!" as they shortened stroke to come up well for a landing, and in what seemed only a few minutes more we heard the actual swirl of the paddles, and the canoes came out of the darkness into the ring of lantern light, and we heard Mr. Charles's voice speaking, as if we had just come into the library to see him.

CHAPTER XI

JERRY'S THEORY

"THE back is it? That's bad, that's bad!"

"Yes, to be sure, the spine. Ye hurt the spine, d'ye see, and there ye are. Throwed out of a racing carriage when he was a wild young lad in college, as I hear. He was all broke and trampled like."

Maggie was kneeling rather stiffly on the rocks, washing towels with a stick, as she says they do in Scotland. They do it too in France, I think, though when I said so to Maggie she said rather scornfully, "Dare say; I never heard myself of their washing to any degree."

Jerry was scrubbing his bright kettles

in water and sand a little farther along on the beach, and they talked back and forth slowly and rather loud, and with long pauses in between, as if neither thought so very much of what the other was saying. James, looking particularly like Uncas in his leather-colored clothes, was fishing from the gray pine at the end of the point, and I, having still my darning to do, was sitting cross-legged in the sun a little farther in-shore on the point. We were all talking about Mr. Charles.

For as I said, Mr. Charles had really come. He was right here in camp, lying by the camp-fire, his dark eyes looking and looking into the woods as if he could not look enough.

"The woods!" he said over and over again. "The woods, the woods, the woods!" and he put out his hands on each side to take hold of the smooth tree trunks nearest him, "and I thought I was never going to see them any more.

Oh young ones, you can't ever know quite how much you've done."

"He don't move like it was his back," Jerry said thoughtfully, scratching the back of his head, "acts more like he was kind of bust all over. Not to say bust, but kind of numbed all over; spring gone some way, and no new spring to put him together again."

"He will have had the best that money can buy, doctors, surgeons, and the whole affair," Maggie said discouragingly.

"Ever take me for a nurse?" said Jerry, tilting his cap on to the back of his head and looking up at Maggie. "That's what I am, though. And I learned it in Cairo, Egypt, which is a funny place. See me in my white nurses' clothes, and I'm handsome!"

"Eh — a nurse! Tell me the like of that!" Maggie called, derisively.

"This is to certify, et settery," Jerry went on calmly, "it is a fact; but what

I was thinking over in my head is this. There's no doctor up here to advise with, which is perhaps a good thing, and again perhaps it isn't, and of course it's just as he thinks about it himself. But there's a way of — not rubbing exactly isn't what you'd call it, but kind of what you might call *handling* all over. I learned it when I was over there from them brown Ayrabs. I've put together my father, and an English colonel, and my brother Tom — though I don't know as you'd call that a handsome job — when they was bust, well, pretty near kindling wood. A hay load fell on Father. Yes. How does that strike you, Jim?"

James had been listening, but he had not spoken, and kept on casting his fly in long casts. He had caught several trout, besides yellow perch, which of course are not so grand, though Jerry and I both think them very good.

He shifted his rod and straightened himself in his tree.

"I should go ahead and try," he said, "this minute. It sounds as if it might be wonderful. How many kinds of things do you know, Jerry, anyhow? It couldn't possibly do him any harm, could it; and if it gave him too much pain you'd stop. And we can write to Father, at least to Flora's father, tonight. Five trout and seven yellow perch, and one I threw away. But it's what you must expect, fishing here where it's so shallow. I am coming down now."

Jerry was partly right and partly wrong, we found out afterwards, but oh! thank goodness, he was much more right. As I have said, Mr. Charles's back was of course permanently twisted, so that even now he limps; but in a few weeks — but I am not going to tell yet everything that happened. Jerry began his rubbing, or working over, or whatever

you would call it right off, and you will see for yourselves.

Mr. Charles *belonged* in camp from the first minute that he got there, just like James. Though he was so ill and weak and tired, he seemed to be at the head of everything from the first minute. Even Mr. Sawyers came to him for orders, and Maggie would have liked to slave for him; and though the journey took, as Maggie said, "the very last weary drop of strength he had to give" (so that he himself asked as they landed if we had not a derrick handy to hoist him out of the canoe, for he did not think anything else could manage it, unless the ice-tongs), still from the first breath of the woods he seemed to get new strength. He lay very still all day, on the fir branches which Jerry had laid thick for him by the rocks beside the fire, looking up and far into the woods around, and loving, I think, every bit of bark

and leaf and twig. And he was nearly always full of fun, whether he was tired or not, and making funny jokes.

He was in pain a good deal, I am afraid, and every little while had bad attacks of it (but less and less, thank goodness, as the summer went on), and after these he had to lie still in his tent a day or two and Maggie waited on him "hand and foot," and would have liked to do it, I think, on all fours. His tent had been put where he could lie and watch the stars when he was long awake, and feel the fresh wind blowing off the water.

We now had such cosy meals, cosiest almost when it was raining, when the rain drummed on all the leaves outside as well as on the tent roof, and Jerry brought in the dinner wearing his big rubber boots, with his umbrella handle put well down the back of his neck.

On rainy days we stayed mostly in the

dining-tent or Mr. Charles's tent. James carved on his chain or other things, and I whittled too, or wove basket-work out of roots or did my horrid stockings. Then James worked at his geometry every day and I did my arithmetic, James sometimes helping me, because I wanted to surprise Mamma when she came back; she does so want me to do a little better.

Mr. Charles read aloud, sometimes out of his book, which was Shakespeare, or sometimes out of Jerry's, which was the Farmer's Almanac. These were almost the only books in camp, except the Bible, and he read us chapters and chapters out of that.

He made us cry with laughing over Puck and Bottom. He would begin with:

"Masters, spread yourselves," and then:

"Will not the ladies be afeard of the lion?"

"I fear it, I promise you."

And then:

"For there is not a more fearful wild fowl than your lion living; and we ought to look to't."

"In this same interlude it doth befall
That I, one Snout by name, present a wall,"

finished us completely, and James laughed till he was bright red and the tears ran down his cheeks.

Then Mr. Charles would say, "Enough of these frivolities," and take the almanac, and read like this:

"James, my dear fellow, I hope you have not forgotten that you should never rub soap directly on flannel cloth or woollen goods. Make a mild soap-suds, in which soak them thoroughly."

Or:

"Flora, is it possible that you are not aware that now is the time to sow turnips for a winter crop? The old purple-top flat turnip, you will be glad to hear,

holds its place as the standard for a field crop, and with care furnishes a large amount of feed at small expense."

" ' Perhaps in no case are the results of indolence more conspicuous than in the care of poultry.' I fear this may apply especially to Maggie."

(Maggie has chickens at home which she is dreadfully fond of, and which she nurses and watches over early and late. She says they are intelligent as people, and far more than most).

Mr. Charles and Jerry had long bouts of seeing which could tell the most tremendous story, while James smiled and chuckled and went on with his whittling.

" Now Mr. Charles," Jerry would say when he brought in the flapjacks, and we had said how good they were (perhaps after Mr. Charles had been having one of his attacks of pain, and we were having supper together in his tent).

" Now you say you call them flapjacks.

Now there was a feller I knew, nine feet high, — it takes a mighty tall man for first-class flapjacks — "

"Now Jerry, Jerry, come, I knew that man, and he wasn't one inch over eight feet seven — "

"And that man," Jerry would go on as if he had not heard a bit, "he'd make flapjacks two feet across, so light he had to put potatoes on the corners to hold them down, — when there was wind anyways high at all, that is."

"Flapjacks don't have corners, Jerry," I said.

"Now I want you to believe this feller's did; corners all the way around, *and* up the middle. Crispy corners, that was just the perfect beauty of them."

Jerry pretended he thought Mr. Charles "one of these city sports," when really he has lived in New York for several years himself.

"How high now was it, sir," he said

one day, " that you was saying that city house of yours was? "

" Now Jerry, hear what you are calling high! You say you've lived in New York, but I believe it really was Squedunk. Why that little house isn't over forty stories, not a foot. I will say, though, that it's convenient. Folding legs and arms, you see, on all the chairs, and automobile fixtures. Yes, it's very restful."

Then Jerry said it was remarkable, and told about his uncle's farm in Maine, where onions sprout so fast they kill the cows.

" Crowd right up round them so they can't get through. Why, my first cousin's brother's uncle's wife lost nine good cows. Onions just grew right up and choked 'em, coming home to milking. Yes sir, it's dangerous."

In the evening the fire flared up in a great sheaf of sparks, and all the near twigs of the evergreens showed soft and

feathery. The warm light danced and flickered, and showed black openings and shadows in the woods.

"In the days of me youth," Mr. Charles said, lying at full length beside the fire, and then would tell how he was once a merchant captain, or a pirate chief,

Or,

"When I was principal goldsmith to the King of Spain,"

Or,

"Performing on the harp once before President Diaz — "

There were real stories too, of things that really happened to a "fellow he knew," and Maggie would say, "Eh, sirs!" and move up nearer to us with her knitting.

Maggie would get excited, and tell stories too, herself, about fairy-rings and witch-fords, and more kinds of fairies and brownies than I had ever heard of.

" The pyxies, do you see, and all such like," she would begin, or else tell about the " old ancient lords that had their mighty castles and black dungeons of old," and Jerry would stop with his dish-pan in his hand and listen till it was time and after for us all to go to bed.

CHAPTER XII

BOGS, AND BEARS

JAMES had a hut, up through the firs and just beyond the hemlocks, where the old deserted trail turns toward the north. He found it one day when he was going fishing, though I think Jerry knew of it before. He had it for a sort of work-shop, and kept his fishing-rod and gun in it, and the different things we found which were nice to keep. The hut faced south, in what perhaps once had been a clearing, long ago, and it was nearly always warm and still and sunny. Partridge berries grew on the soft ground all about, and twin-flower. The ground is fine red rotted wood, where trees have fallen long and long ago, and partridges came nearly every day to strut in the sun

and pick up cones, and ruffle up the powdered red wood into their feathers.

James did whatever work he had up here, cleaning and polishing his gun and fishing-rod and mending and making flies, which he did beautifully. He sat on the roof to work, dangling his legs.

I was sitting beside him one morning on the roof, when Tom came singing up the path, bringing us letters (only he played he had just come by accident).

"Why, funny thing," he said, "my coming on you two! And funny again, here's a letter right here in my pocket, and to a lady, to Miss Flora Maxwell. I don't know as you've seen her any wheres abouts?"

The letter was the first that I had had from Billy.

"Dear Flora," it began, "I hope you are very well. Tell Maggie she is an old duck, and I should think she must look

pretty queer in camp. Tell her the cats are well and one will eat tomatoes. I am very well, at least I am not, but perhaps I shall be if ever I stop peeling. This is the first letter I have written yet. I do hate beds. Oh Flora, do please send me different things from bogs. I do like bogs better than any other kinds of places. I believe I was a boggist, or a tadpole, long ago. I lie here and think of the different kinds of things that grow in them, and I suppose it will be weeks and weeks before I see as much as a mud puddle. Mamma says I have written enough, and I suppose I have. Do send the bog things. This letter has been baked so you won't get it too. From

Yours truly,

BILLY."

Billy always puts " yours truly " in a letter, because once when Papa was ill, and Billy was writing down some letters

he dictated, Papa had to write a harsh letter to a person who had been behaving very horridly about the price of logs, and Billy forgot, and put " your loving friend," and Papa was not at all the friend, much less loving, of a person who had been cheating him for months about the logs. I suppose it sounded funny in that kind of letter, and Papa roared with laughter when he heard from the man, though I should think he even might have been annoyed. But it frightened Billy so much about sounding affectionate in letters that since then he never puts anything more loving than " yours truly."

I read James the letter and he said, " Why don't we go this morning? We can get snails at least, and pitcher plants and sphagnum, and probably lots of other things besides. Let's come along."

I know the way Billy feels about his bogs. You feel the same about the sea, with the sea wind that lifts and holds

you, and the sea smell, and sea rocks under your feet to run on. I feel it too about upland hilltops, bare and open, with rocks and crunching lichens and a free wind blowing, where you feel as if you could run and climb for miles. You feel it about great swamps, lying all gray and ghostly, and about snow, of course, and woods in winter.

We could not go that morning after all, for it suddenly came on to pour with rain, so Mr. Charles read us "The Pirate" in his tent instead, while James's last mended pair of stockings dried before the fire. The next morning though we started early, with everything wet and fresh after the rain. We took the landing-net, and two of Papa's japanned tin botanical cases, to carry our lunch and bring back things for Billy, and a tin pail, to bring back fish and start a camp aquarium.

It was a lovely morning, sunny and

smelling of warm leaves. Our bog is a mile up the trail, and it is a wonderful place, a fairy play-ground. It is a water island in the woods, a little lake of clear still forest water, full of the green reflection of the trees, with water-lilies and yellow cow-lilies at one end of it. On one side is a little bluff, with tall dark hemlocks, and opposite it a tiny curve of beach where you find stickle-backs and sometimes cray-fish in the shallows.

The nearer end is all tall waving cotton-grass, and in among the grasses are beautiful swamp orchids. There are pitcher plants along the edge, next the shore, and wild white callas in the pot-holes, and sundew, the plant which catches insects on its sticky crimson hairs, and I am sorry to say kills and sucks them up. There are floating islands, where rails and redwings nest, and dry swamp islands or eyots near the

mainland, sunny and warm, where Labrador Tea, swamp laurel, and all kinds of warm sweet-smelling things grow in the sun, and everywhere around you there is sphagnum, deep velvety soft pinky-grayey moss, which comes up in handfuls and armfuls if you pick it, and which is nice to make beds, or for packing things, or playing with in every kind of way.

(James began in the first week building a canoe to paddle on the bog lake. He kept it in the woods beside the bog, and worked at it secretly, keeping it for a surprise. And I must say it was a surprise, for it was not ready until nearly September and at its trial trip, which Mr. Charles and Tom came up to see, it rolled over, and nothing would ever make it stay right side up.)

We took off our shoes and stockings the first thing. The bog is very nice indeed to wade in. You feel the velvet moss under your feet, and the water, which is

clear and black, does not seem dirty, but only steeped with peat and sweet clean roots.

We found all sorts of lovely things right off. We found mussel shells on the white sand, pearl-lined, snails, and an empty snake skin, and a redwing's nest with four blue scrawled and scratched and spotted eggs in it, the second brood.

We found cranberries, quite unripe and almost white, and creeping snowberries, and I gathered a handkerchief full to make a necklace. We found pitcher plants of course, in clumps and colonies, and picked out beautiful pitchers. We found bladderwort, with yellow blossoms and little green bladders keeping it afloat, and we also found a pollywog with a bright orange stomach, and the most exciting thing which we had found at all, a crayfish. We took these last two home in the pail, and they got out the first night, and I

believe Maggie knows how, but really, of course, they are much happier in the lake.

"Dear me," James said, wading out farther and farther and with his face quite black, "you know this is really wonderful. It's the best wade I've had for years and years. But I honestly think you oughtn't to come out any further, Flora. It's up to your knees already, and it's awfully black."

Sure enough, the cotton grass where we were wading did seem to be settling, and it shook at every step for yards around us, but James went ashore, and after pulling and tugging till he was crimson, worked a black log with a piece of root out of the peat, which he laid down for me to walk along, and by balancing on this we climbed to five floating islands one after another, without getting much wetter, and had a splendid time.

Afterwards we had lunch, and then I

sat still in the sun, on one of the dry swamp-islands near the mainland, smelling the sweetness of the Labrador Tea, watching the butterflies, and stringing my berries into a pink and white necklace, while James waded farther in for cotton grass tufts, which he wanted for his flies.

Soon I even stopped stringing, it was so very still and warm and beautiful. It was a little hot, but not too much. I seemed to get the breath of all the sweet things round me, and not only bees, but all kinds of other cheerful things were humming in the sun. The little lake was like a mirror, full of the green woods, and the water-lilies opened in the sun. Every kind of beautiful thing grows round the edge, and so thick that it is like the shining walls of an enchanted castle. You cannot see a foot through into the forest beyond.

Presently James called that he was going farther off, to get some arrow-

heads, and I began stringing my berries again. I do not know how far James had gone, but it had fallen very still, when it seemed to me that I began to hear rustling, and something working through the bushes on the side opposite where James had gone.

I am quite silly about big wild animals. I knew that there were no dangerous ones, at least none near us, that panthers had not been seen for years and years, and that black bears run if they see you, but still I think of them sometimes, especially at night.

There certainly was a rustling in the bushes. Deer had been coming out now and again to drink, and I told myself it was one of them, but it was different. It was more stealthy and slow, and much, much heavier. It stopped, then moved some more, and stopped again, and then came on stealthily, and prickles ran up my back and over my hair.

James was nowhere in sight, though his shoes and stockings lay there on a log, and now a turtle had come out and sat beside them.

The heavy, soft, stealthy, rustling sound went on, and now I could see the bushes shaking, and presently they parted.

Oh dear, it was a bear. He was enormous, and dark blackish brown, and I suddenly felt queer and empty all over, and my breath short.

He looked out and round him quietly, and snuffed and put out his long tongue to lick at some early high-bush blueberries, and then backed into the bushes again, and then he changed his mind and came out, and began to roll slowly in my direction, though I do think without seeing me.

I sat quite still, holding my berries in my hand, but squashed quite flat. I hope I should have done the right thing, and either " shooed " him away or sat quietly and let him snuff at me if he had wanted

to, for of course black bears really do not prefer people for food, but just then there was a shout, and something fell with a splash by the bear's nose, and made him turn with a surprised sort of grunt. It was James's sweater with a stone tied in it, and James was running and breaking through the bushes, shouting and calling the bear names as he ran.

"Get out!" he called. "Get out, you silly great goose!" And then I heard an actual whack, whack, and a great cracking and crashing as the bear backed and turned and began shambling off.

"Oh James, please stop!" I screamed. "It is a bear!" but James paid no attention.

"Get out!" he called again, untying his sweater and beating and shaking it at the great beast. "Flora, you'd better go over towards the bluff, though he isn't coming at all in your direction. Go on, you great big black pig! Get out, go

"'GO ON, YOU GREAT BIG BLACK PIG!'"

back where you belong!" till the poor bear crashed faster and faster through the trees and branches, and finally lumbered away in a heavy trot.

"He's gone," James said, coming back red and out of breath, "so scared he was perfectly silly. Never mind, I think we'll go too, in the other direction. He simply is enormous, and if he happened to feel hungry, I really don't know what we'd do. Where are your shoes and stockings? These here seem to be mine."

We hunted, but I couldn't find my shoes and stockings at all.

"Dear me," James said, after we had been looking and looking, "I know now, I picked them up and threw them after the bear. I thought they were mine, and I had nothing to throw. Dear me, and they may be anywhere by now."

He hunted faithfully everywhere, but he had run a good way into the thick high bushes and we could not find them, and

as it was growing dark, we had to start without them, and James went up alone the next morning and found them, after hunting over an hour. He tried to make me wear his, which of course I would not do. I said:

"I do not want to, and they are too big besides." But James only gets more patient the more he gets decided.

"I know they are too big for you," he said, "of course, but the bushes are extremely scratchy all the way home. I threw away your shoes and stockings, and you ought to wear mine back, but if you won't, you have to wear one at least, and we'll each be unscratched on one side," and that was what we did.

The way seemed longer than it ever had before, and the woods higher and harder to get through. It was growing dark besides, and I could not help thinking more and more about the bear, and James told me afterwards that he did too. As it grew

darker we hurried more and more till our hands and clothes were covered with moss and dirt with climbing over fallen trees and rocks, and we were hot and and our faces covered with scratches.

"Gracious," James said as he pulled me out from I think the fifth mossy hole into which I had tumbled, "your hair is perfectly full of sticks already. Flora, imagine being lost. I hope we should have sense to find a comfortable place, and go to sleep till morning, but I don't know."

How he kept track of the blaze marks in the growing dark I do not see, but he led us quite as straight as Jerry could have. The last bit, coming through the hemlocks, we almost ran, and burst into camp just as Mr. Charles (he said) was sending Jerry out with searchlights and bloodhounds on the leash to look for us.

We went out on the point to wash our

hands and faces. The lake was darkening fast and a fresh wind was blowing. There was only a last strip of pale clear yellow in the west, and in the middle of the light the new moon shining. No stars were out, for overhead was all dark stripes of cloud. We put our hot faces down and let the waves splash them, and ran our arms down into the cool deep water. One lonely loon was calling far away, and as we looked, a late string of sheldrake came down the lake, scattering the water in a bright streak under the shore.

CHAPTER XIII

MAGGIE'S THEORY

Mr. Charles certainly was much better. He still had bad attacks from time to time, and often too he still was very tired. He would lie silently looking into the trees or away over the lake, and I could not help thinking of what Mrs. Carey had said, — "Something else happened, something besides his illness, which made him very unhappy."

"Don't you think he's ever so much better?" I asked Maggie one morning. "Please, you are pulling my hair!"

We could hear Mr. Charles humming a German song inside his tent, and presently he shouted to Jerry that he was going fishing.

Maggie closed her lips. She was brushing my hair, which she does very hard, and presently Mr. Charles came and stood in the doorway of his tent, fitting his fishing-rod together.

He was, as I have said, wonderfully better. He was very thin of course still, but he was browner and stronger. From lying so white and tired by the fire, he was beginning to get about the camp, first with Jerry's help and very slowly, but soon helping himself, catching at the trees and so lifting and swinging himself along.

It was a great day when he first got down to the shore, to fish from the point.

"Aha," he said, settling himself down between the rocks. "My kingdom for a fish!" and sent the long line hissing out thirty yards over the water.

He caught his trout with a quick flick of his wrist, and Jerry made a cake to celebrate and it fell perfectly flat. He

fished more wonderfully than I ever saw, and Jerry said, "The Dogs!" and "Cucumber!" which were his strongest expressions.

Still Maggie would not say she thought he would get well; and that very night after we had been talking he had another bad attack of pain.

"Is the pain bad, my lad?" I heard Maggie saying in the middle of the night.

"Oh Maggie dear, yes, it is, it is a bad one. Never mind though, they don't last long, thank goodness, and now thank you, and do go to bed, like a good soul, and get some sleep."

I don't think Maggie did go, but stayed rubbing his hands until he fell asleep at last, towards morning.

In the morning he was white and tired again, but very funny, as he was always after one of his attacks.

"It's horrible to laugh," James said, coming out with his face bright red and

his eyes streaming, " when he's so weak and tired, but he's been telling Maggie how he once had red hair and was engaged to a beautiful Circassian princess, and what can you do? "

" Oh Maggie dear," I said, " why doesn't he get well? "

" The back," Maggie said sadly. " It's his back, his spine."

" But Mr. Charles says his back is so much better! "

" Yes, and so it is," Maggie went on more cheerfully, " and I don't say but he'll be better yet. Never rightly straight, like James McGregor there " (Maggie was extremely proud of James) " but strong enough to take his way through life. But do you see, there's more of it besides, or to my way of thinking.

" The friends, the folk, the love and need that holds ye, that is what binds the spirit," dear Maggie went on saying. " What has he loving him or that belongs

to him? His back's the least thing now, or would be if he'd the right thing to bring back life to him. There's been years of sorrow and trouble on him, and the lad is fretted through and through with loneliness. How can the tree grow without light and rain? He wants a wife."

Mr. Charles was well and bright again the next day, and as it was raining we acted charades in the dining-room tent, and afterwards a play. I was the Sleeping Beauty, James the Prince, Mr. Charles the old king, and Maggie (calling it childish doings) was a splendid fairy godmother. We tried to get Jerry to come and be the nobles, but he said he only came out now in Grand Opera, — "In justice to myself," — but he was audience.

That night we had our first alarm in camp, and it was Maggie who made it.

"I see him! Watch him go! I tell ye,

it's bears at last!" I heard her scream as I jumped awake out of a sound sleep in the middle of the night.

There was a great noise and confusion, every one talking at once, and Maggie screaming directions.

"Look at him go, the black one!" she cried out, which made me feel that at least it wasn't panthers. Suddenly there was a much louder confusion of voices, *all* Jerry's pails, I should think, fell over in one crash, and the kitchen lantern went out and then we all found out suddenly what it was.

It was not bears. It was two smaller animals, and *black and white.* They had been eating up the cake behind the tent and had been frightened suddenly, and they got all over everything. Mr. Sawyers was very much the worst, poor man, next morning. He could not come near the tents for nearly a week, and Jerry had to bury most of his clothes.

James was not so surprised as I supposed he would be when I told him what Maggie had said, that Mr. Charles was lonely and needed to be married.

"I suppose probably he does," he said. "You see he has no brothers nor sisters of his own, and no father nor mother, and imagine! The only trouble is that I don't see what we can do about it, for there are no girls nor ladies here at all."

CHAPTER XIV

THE FAIRY LADY

I WENT down one morning to the beach to get foam islands in behind the rocks, for there had been a storm the night before. It was early and no one else was up but Jerry, who was busy with his shining pans and kettles. It was all bright and blue, with sunlight sparkling like diamonds. There were my foam-cups dancing behind the rocks, which were all clean and black, and I climbed out to get fresh ones, white and crisp.

I had my shoes and stockings off, not to get wet, and after I had played with my foam-cups I went on along the second beach, which curves to the south,

to warm my feet where the sun fell on it. The sand was firm and hard and the water clear, with only a few soft blazes of diamonds where the sunlight fell on it between the trees. There were ribbed wave-marks under the shallow water, and you could see black fallen twigs and branches and water-rotted wood for ever so far out.

I warmed my feet and got them cold again with wading, and went farther and farther, to where the beach begins to curve to the east, towards the deep Ega bay. The trees and bushes hung over the edge of the beach, and I thought it would be fun to pick high-bush blueberries, and take them home for Jerry to cook for supper. I was sitting on the sand, making a cup of wild grape leaves to hold them, when I heard a person's voice behind me singing. I dropped all my leaves and all the berries which I had gathered in my lap.

It was a real voice, and it was close behind me in the woods.

" The fairies lead ye through the woods by song," Maggie was telling us only the night before. " They sing high and clear like the falling waters."

This voice was sweet and high, like carolling, and what made it seem more strange, I did not hear a single sound of footsteps. I felt little shivers running up my spine. It is no use though sitting still when you are frightened; you only get more creepy up the back of your head and down your back, as if you could not possibly move at all, so I jumped up and took hold of the branches hanging over the beach, and pulled myself up the bank, with my heart thumping. Inside the woods were all green underbrush, and I could see nothing, but I pushed the leaves apart and went ahead, going quite softly by stepping on the moss. In front of me there was a big gray rock, and on

"SHE WAS SITTING ON THE MOSS — DRAWING A TINY FLOWER."

the other side of it I saw the fairy lady.

She was sitting on the moss, leaning on one hand, and with the other she was sketching a tiny flower. She was dressed like a boy, or like Rosalind, in leather-colored clothes, and her hair fell round her shoulders like a boy's. She had a scarlet cap, a little on one side.

I saw that she was painting, not only sketching. She had a silver cup, sunk in the moss, and the water tinkled in it as she washed her brush. It was a purple flower she was doing, a curious shape, striped purple and white, with two rose-colored horns or petals up behind and a little yellow beard. I had not seen them before. There were several about, and afterwards I picked some and put them in my frock.[1]

She talked to the flower as she painted it, and every little while she broke out

[1] The flower is Calypso Borealis.

singing, and a thrush sitting on a low branch came and looked at her. These were the words, all sung with pretty trills and carollings.

"There is a lady sweet and kind,
Was never wight so moved my mind.
I did but see her passing by,
And yet I love her! —
And yet I love her till I die!"

I learned it standing there while she was singing it. I never thought at all of speaking to her. I stood quite still beside my rock, breathing as softly as I could.

At last:

"There," she said, "my pretty, you are done! Yes, and I do think you are nice besides."

She put her cheek down on the green moss to look at the flower sideways, and then she laughed and kissed it. She washed her brush out carefully, and then

took the silver cup out of the moss and looked about for somewhere to pour out the water, which was painty. I was glad she did not want to throw it on the pretty ferns and moss. Instead she poured it on the roots of a great hemlock.

"For I don't think," she said aloud, "that it will hurt your skin!"

She looked up the great trunk to where, far up, the upper branches were out free and caught the sun.

"You splendid thing!" she said.

When she stood up, I saw that she was tall, taller than I at least, and very slim. She had on soft brown-fringed moccassins or moccassin-slippers, cross-laced high with leather thongs, and with scarlet bead-work on the toes. She stooped to fasten one, and then stood up again. She wore a silver pencil case, carved, at her belt, and into this she put her pencils and her paint brushes. The

paint box and the silver cup and sketch-book went in a leather pouch hanging at her back, and I saw she had a horn, a hunting horn, hung on a scarlet ribbon over her shoulder. She sang still as she put her things away, and then in a minute she was gone, flitting much more than running through the woods.

I stood looking at the place where the woods had closed after her, and all about the moss where she had sat, and then remembered breakfast time, and climbed out again through the high shrubs on to the beach.

I almost felt I had imagined it. Everything was still, sunny, and silent. There was the empty beach, there were my footprints (bare, which Maggie would not like); there was the lake dancing and sparkling like diamonds. There was the tall still shadow of the woods, and the dark wooded islands, and it seemed as if no person could

possibly have been there, breaking the sunny silence and loneliness.

Every one laughed at me when I got back to camp (only Maggie took me into her tent and reminded me, that a lady was a lady "in what place so-ever," and no lady ever was unpunctual at meals). They asked me if I had seen brownies as well as fairies, and Jerry said my lady was a fly-up-the-creek, which turn into anything they like, "fishes or folks," and Mr. Charles said if I had looked closer, I should have seen she really was a fresh-water mer-maid — "which have blue tails, of course, instead of green."

Only James believed me.

"Of course it isn't a fairy; that is nonsense. It must have been a person, and that seems nonsense too, but if you saw her, why then of course you did."

We hunted for her, but found nothing at all, though once or twice I thought

I heard her singing. They did not laugh at me for long, though. We were going out fishing for pickerel off one of the swamps at night. We passed a long low ghostly swamp of bulrushes, where a great blue heron got up as we went by, and then a swamp huger and still more ghostly, miles of dead and dying ash-trees, bearded with long gray moss. They reach nearly as far as the foot of the mountains, still and silent, with black streams showing every little while between the trees. It really is a horrible sort of place. You could get lost before you had gone ten yards and flounder and stumble on until you died, unless you kept your way by climbing trees to see. The great blue herons nest here, far, far up, and night herons, but nothing else I think, but frogs and snakes. Even the moss and thick ferns and creepers are a poisonous green.

Coming back with a string of bright green and yellow pickerel, we passed the bulrush swamp again. It is the sort of place where Indians might hide, where the tall rushes shut you close after the first step; and here at a little opening *we saw a canoe drawn up*, and on the sand beside it *a pair of small brown-fringed moccassin-slippers, with scarlet bead-work on the toes !*

CHAPTER XV

THE STORM

It began with a good thorough soaking rain, and the soft leaf mould drank and drank it up. The next day it kept on, and all the night, and the next and next, drumming steadily on the leaves till the water was standing in clear black puddles everywhere, growing almost into clear black lakes, and the fire hissed and scolded, and Jerry said he should have to make tea in the hot water bottle. We waded in rubber boots all about camp, and all carried umbrellas.

We stayed mostly in the dining-room tent, having lessons and games with Mr. Charles, and then working while he read aloud to us. We all wrote birch-bark letters home to Billy, and made birch-

bark envelopes to fit them, and sealed and stamped them, and he really got them; and Mr. Charles and James made a checker-board at one end of the dining-room table, whittling the rough wood smooth, ruling the squares, and coloring the alternate ones with charcoal and a little oil. They were two days doing it, for each carved a different pattern at his end of the board, and then they played with acorns, green and brown.

It was the most comfortable rain I ever knew. The tree trunks were all fresh and bright and black, and the leaves wet and dripping. Every moss cushion was as wet as a sponge and it seemed as if you could hear the whole forest drinking quietly.

On the third day, Mr. Charles said he had sent home for his second best diving-suit, and that he would have directions for putting on life-preservers put up in all the tents. James floated a cedar log

in the pond which had formed behind the kitchen tent, and the woods were full everywhere of the sound of rushing streams; and then in the afternoon the real wild storm came on. The quiet sound of rain falling and dripping, soaking its way steadily into everything, changed to a wild rush of lashing wind and storm. The forest bent and roared. It seemed as if the blasts were tearing the great trees apart. Sharp rain-gusts drove across the lake, which soon was blotted out. Clear black torrents poured down past the tents, white mist was beaten from the ground, and there was a wall of gray rain between each tent and the next. The rain stopped a little when a gust came, and the wind shook the tents as if it would tear them down, but mostly it was a perfect thundering down-pour, as if it was being poured down out of the black clouds in buckets.

I got to the tent in a gust which nearly

blew me through the flaps and left me out of breath, and Jerry and Tom and Mr. Sawyers all three helped Maggie.

At four o'clock James's tent blew down flat, and they could not even try to put it up again, but weighted it down with stones and left it where it was. Mr. Charles came in laughing, drenched and dripping, rain running down his face and his broad shoulders, from having been out with Tom putting extra ropes on our three tents, while James and Jerry and Mr. Sawyers did the kitchen ones. James said when he got out that he could hardly open his eyes against the rain or see his own hands, and as for talking, you might shout yourself black in the face, but it made no difference, and he and Jerry nearly fastened Mr. Sawyers up inside the tent, not knowing he was there.

"Canoe gone, sir!" Tom panted, staggering into the tent out of the driving

storm. " The light green one. I thought they wasn't far enough up amongst the trees, and I was hauling them up farther down there with Sawyers when the wind whirled her out of our hands like a flitter-bat. She's got twenty miles to drive, though, and only sand to land on, and maybe this football game will stop before she gets there."

It had grown too exciting to either read or play games, and we sat in the dining-room tent wondering how soon it would grow a little better, or how it could possibly get worse, which it seemed to be doing.

" Flora, do you feel actually sleepy? " James said. " I do. I meant to help Jerry with the lanterns, and I am going to, but it seems as if everything but sleepiness was beaten out of my head. It is foolish for a storm to last as long as this."

They got the lanterns, for it was nearly

dark, though only five o'clock, and the lantern light made the tent seem cosy and safe, even with all the roar of storm outside, and I actually went to sleep with my head on Maggie's knee.

It was only a little while after, with the storm at its height, that we all heard a cry. It woke me up as if I had been struck. It seemed to come from the woods, a call or cry for help, and we all jumped to our feet, and then, just as a small wet bird is driven by the rain, a small, slight, slender person seemed to flit or be blown through the woods and into the tent and —

"Oh," I screamed, "it is my fairy lady!"

There she really was. She was drenched and dripping with rain and she was out of breath, as if she had beaten her way here through the storm. She was still dressed in her boy's clothes, like Rosalind.

"Oh can you come and help!" the Fairy Lady said.

We all stood staring at her as she stood leaning back against the tent-pole, panting for breath.

"There has been a landslide" she said, between quick breaths, "a dreadful one. Oh, do you suppose that you can come to-night? I came on here for help as fast as I could. We knew there was a camp here. We have seen your light."

"A landslide—" Mr. Charles said coming forward. The rest of us were too surprised to speak.

"Yes," she said, still breathing in quick gasps, "It is on the other side of the mountain, of the Ega. We have been there all summer. There suddenly came a great roar out of the storm, and then rocks—it seemed as if the whole mountain-side was down on top of us— Oh do you think you can come now, to-night? It is

"'OH, HELP!' THE FAIRY LADY SAID, 'PLEASE HELP!'"

a storm, I know, and it is dark, but I can show you every step of the way!"

"My child," Mr. Charles said quietly, "you could not go back to-night. How you got here at all is more than I can imagine."

"Oh but I can, I can!" she said a little wildly. "I am not tired at all, and I was not hurt or scratched a single bit! I must go back to them! How could you tell the way?"

"We could not possibly let you," Mr. Charles interrupted. "It is eight miles from here to the foot of the Ega. How you can have got through in this storm I do not see! We cannot let you. But you must try hard not to be too anxious," he went on gravely and kindly. "We shall try to get help to them, and we will trust that they are only stunned with the force of the fall. How many of you are there in camp?"

"Three," she said. "Besides myself,

that is; my uncle, Uncle Lewis, and the two guides. I could not make them hear at all, nor speak — "

"We shall try to get help through at once," Mr. Charles said. "Try to tell carefully just how you came, and we shall get to them. The storm is easier already" (which was true; the rain was steady, not in drenching torrents, and there was a great sighing and waving of the trees, instead of the roar of wind), "and there will be a late moon before midnight."

"Can you go now?" she said.

"I can't" Mr. Charles said flushing up, a painful red, "I'm lame. The men can get through, though," he went on cheerfully. "They know this country like the back of their hand. And now you must drink this, and sit down and rest."

He made her drink something out of his silver flask, and made her sit down, and Maggie covered her with cloaks and shawls, everything which we had been

able to keep dry, and Mr. Charles went out to speak to the men. All three were going.

"Now try to tell us," he said gently as he came back with Tom and Jerry, and signed to Maggie and me not to disturb her. Her soft lashes had drooped, indeed for a minute she seemed to droop and waver all over but she roused herself to explain to them clearly and carefully.

"It is straight to the east from here at first," she said, "I think for more than a mile. I do not think that there is anything different or special. Then there is a big split rock with a forked pine growing beside it, and you turn south just at its corner, and keep on. I bent twigs as much as I could. I think it is an old trail too, and that there are blaze marks, but how can you tell at night?"

She told them carefully every step of the way. Only once she seemed to be troubled and frightened.

"Oh do you think that they can do it?" she said to Mr. Charles, and Mr. Charles nodded, though without speaking.

Jerry watched her and listened, and nodded and said, "Yes, yes," kindly and cheerfully. Only when she had told them about half the way, he stood up and interrupted.

"Why, I know it already," he said, "You needn't tell me one word more, young lady. Swings to the right through a wood of little young beeches? Why it's the old Ega trail, plain as the back of my hand!"

"Oh do you know it?" she said. "Do you think you really can find it?"

"Like my own name. Just like Jeremiah Mixter. Why, I know every step of the way, and where you're camping. Don't you worry nor fret, we'll get there sure as a Dutchman.

"Why it's a bouley-var," dear Jerry went on, smiling to cheer her up. "Plain

as my brother Tom, and now I'm talking," and he would not let her thank him.

Mr. Charles limped out to get bandages and ropes and medicines.

"Now Jerry," he said, "do you think you can fetch it? If it keeps on like this the moon will be out clear in two hour's time, but it will be dark as the inside of your pocket yet in the woods, and as wet as a well. We can't spare time, though. We've got to get help through. Keep your lantern going all the time, and blaze as you go; stop *entirely* if you do miss the path, and don't be *too* sure that you can't get lost, old stick-to-the-trail!"

After they had started Mr. Charles and James hunted about among Jerry's wet cooking things and brought us supper. (The men had taken theirs before they went.) The rain had stopped, but every leaf and twig and branch in the forest was dripping. It was all soaked and

wet, wet crackers and wet bread, doughnuts all soft and spongy, and chocolate and wet dates, but it was very good.

Mr. Charles made the Fairy Lady eat, though at first she could not, and then he and James made the tent as comfortable as they could with shawls and rugs (the dinner-table was the only place that was dry), and then went off to spend the night as well as they could in the dripping kitchen tent.

"I cannot thank you!" the young guest said as they said good night to her.

"Try to get a good night's sleep, and not to be too anxious. That will be the best way."

"Flora," James said, "Good gracious, what an evening! And oh dear, wasn't it fun, that is if they really aren't hurt."

"Good night," I said. "And oh James, isn't she lovely!"

"She is," James said. "She certainly is a peach."

I could only think all this while how lovely she was. She sat quite quietly with her hands dropped in her lap. I think that now that she knew that help was on its way fast to her uncle, and that she had done all she could for him, that she was very nearly unconscious from fatigue. She did obediently whatever Maggie told her. Her collar was a little open, showing her white throat. Her hair was piled, all wet and dripping still, on her small head. Her eyes were dark and soft and very bright. She was quite white with tiredness, but afterwards had color, as we found, like a dark rose. Her eyelashes were long and curled up prettily, and were still bright with raindrops.

Maggie made her take off her dripping things, and rubbed her long hair with a towel which had kept dry. It was as thick as thick.

" Lie down on the table now, the both

of you," she said, making it soft as she could with shawls and rugs. "Thanks be, it's dry."

The Fairy Lady shook her head, and wanted to make Maggie sleep on the table herself, and sit up in her place on a sort of bench there was in the tent, but Maggie would not hear of it, and was very short with me when I tried to curl up on the little bench myself.

"Young ladies are young ladies," was all she would say. She said she would be perfectly comfortable on the bench in her own way, and that we were to be good bairns, and do as we were bid.

The young guest thanked her most prettily, though her words stumbled with tiredness, and being as I said worn out, she lay down, while Maggie made things soft and warm around her, and in a minute she was asleep like a child.

"Worn out, the pretty lamb," Maggie said as she put out the light. "Look at

the dark shadows yonder under her eyes."

I could not go to sleep for a good while, though dear Maggie had made me comfortable as she could. The rain had stopped now, and the late three-quarters moon had come out full. The wind had stopped too, and there was only the drip, drip from the dripping leaves, and all the soft soaking noises of the woods after such a great rain. It seemed very silent after all the sounds of storm which we had heard so long, and the moonlight very white and blank and still. I lay awake a good while, I suppose from being on a table, but what my head was full of was the cold moonlight and how wonderful it was to have the Fairy Lady sleeping there beside me.

CHAPTER XVI

THE OTHER CAMPERS

It was two days before Jerry and Mr. Sawyers came back, or at least before they stopped coming and going, and all that time the little fairy lady slept and slept. She never knew when Tom carried her in and laid her down on the new soft balsam bed which had been made for her beside mine, and I had the fun of having her there beside me, while she knew nothing about it, but only slept softly like the Sleeping Beauty.

"Let her sleep" Mr. Charles said — as I have said, he partly is a doctor. "She is sleeping off the strain and the fatigue. It would have used up a

strong man to get through here to us in such a storm."

She half woke up when Maggie gave her broth, only to go to sleep again with a contented sigh, and it was not till the second day that she woke really, and just as the look of trouble and fright came into her eyes, she heard her uncle's voice speaking to her outside. He said:

"Wherever has the Little Sister got to?"

We liked him from the first minute, and very soon we loved him. His name was Mr. Lewis Middleton, and Mr. Charles seemed to know all about him, and said he was a very distinguished botanist. He was very dreamy and quiet, and seemed to enjoy everything, and he was courteous and gentle, and very absent-minded. His leg had been broken in the landslide (that, wonderfully, was the only injury which happened), and he did not mind at all, but smiled and said he could work all the more at

his microscope. Jerry said the pain of being dragged on a roughly made sledge over eight miles of forest trail must have been horrible (" fierce " was what Jerry said), but that he was " observin' nature clear the whole of the way, and never so much as noticed his leg was hurtin', only to thank us for every step of the road here, and no need. He don't weigh nothin' at all, a man learned and thin as he is."

Mr. Charles set his leg most beautifully, and shortened his own crutches so that Mr. Middleton could use them, (for as I said, he did not need them any more himself), but Mr. Middleton did not use them very much either, for he stayed most of the time in the dining-room tent, working contentedly at his flowers and microscope, and the Fairy Lady brought him fresh water and moss to keep the different flowers in, and painted most beautiful sketches of the flowers, besides his pressing them.

Her name was Miss Elizabeth Middleton, but it was not long before we were all calling her the Little Sister, just as her uncle did. It seemed the nicest name for her to have.

The guides were funny people. They had been stunned, like Mr. Middleton, but not really hurt, though one of them, Pingree, groaned and looked very sad whenever he thought any one was looking. Jerry, though, said that it was entirely humbug.

" Great fat long-legged fellar, eats like a horse, and sleeps like a crocodile."

(" Do crocodiles sleep very well? " I asked, though Jerry always laughs at me for being literal.)

" Crocodiles sleep? Well, I should think they did. And not a pillow those poor creatures don't have, nothing but bolsters. Why I knew a crocodile once — " but just then Maggie called to him to put on dinner.

The other guide, François, was a fat jolly person. He had little pig eyes and was extremely greedy. He thought Jerry was the most wonderful cook he ever had seen, and spent most of the day helping or watching him cook. He would stir and beat Jerry's flapjack batter by the hour, and croon and hum to himself as he was stirring it.

"That fellar," Jerry said, "would beat the Dutch. Why he can eat all day, till I admire him. He tucks right in on everything I cook. I guess he eats all night, right in his sleep, but there, it nourishes him so good he might as well keep on."

François also admired Mr. Sawyers. In fact he looked up to and admired him extremely. He said he was a "ver', ver' beautiful man," and followed him round whenever he got a chance, though all I could ever make out that Mr. Sawyers said to him was "Huh!" And as for beautiful!

Pingree did not stay. He said he thought he was "broke up inside," and perhaps he was, though I hope not I am sure, and he certainly did eat very well. He went with Tom and the mail as far as the Forks, and from there got a boat, and then another, and so "Back to Hentown, which is where he came from," as Jerry said, which was unkind if the poor man really was hurt. François though, thought very much the same.

"Pingree he lazy man, ver' fat, ver' lazy," big François said, crooning and rolling himself back and forth on a big log and staring at the fire, with one of Jerry's doughnuts in each hand.

CHAPTER XVII

THE LITTLE SISTER IN CAMP

So they all came to live with us in camp, to stay at least till Mr. Middleton's leg was well again and strong, and though you would not have thought that camp could be nicer than it had been, it was, and the most wonderful part was having the Little Sister.

She was the loveliest person that I ever saw, and we had her right in camp. It was like having a new precious and delightful thing all of our own, as if we had caught a nest of sunbeams and had them shining all about the camp.

In the mornings I woke up (as I have said, she slept beside me in another green balsam bed), and watched her sleeping,

with her soft hair around her, and then presently she would wake up too, and laugh across at me, and stretch out her pretty hands into the sunbeams shining into our tent. She was as full of fun as a squirrel, and could climb nearly as well as one, when nobody was looking, and she ran as lightly as if there were wings on her feet. She never wore her Rosalind clothes after she came to us, but had pretty green or plaid frocks, which fitted into the woods, and always a bit of scarlet, like Mamma and me.

Maggie loved her. She helped her with her clothes, and wanted to " do for her " entirely as she did for me (all except darning my stockings !), and the Little Sister was so prettily touched and pleased at her liking her, and did sometimes bring her little bits of mending, though she sewed quickly and daintily herself.

Maggie always came into her tent at

night to do her hair. It fell about her shoulders and almost to her knees, and was extremely soft and fine and thick.

" It is a mantle to you," said Maggie, " like the saints of old."

As I have said, she drew and painted flowers for her uncle, and also every kind of thing she loved. This was what she did often when she was off by herself in the forest, but mostly I think she was just looking and looking, running and singing. She sketched without thinking about it, and at any time of day. She would say, " Oh, I must have that," if it was a branch of green against a young birch stem, a bed of ferns, the tree trunks black and wet after a rain, or a line of ducks in the pale sunset coming down the lake, and she would sit right down where she was, one hand on the ground and the other with her pencil, and begin to draw. She did not notice whether we were all round her or not.

" She makes a *picter*, every time, that's right enough," Jerry said.

Sometimes she was a little shy, I think. She sat very quiet in the lovely evenings, sometimes knitting, but more often with her hands in her lap, looking into the fire or into the dark woods around, while the firelight danced on her face and her soft hair.

The fire was huge and bright now in the evenings, for it was beginning to be the middle of August, and the nights were cold. We sat around the fire, Maggie with her knitting, and I with my basket work. James had his carving, or his rifle to polish, and once he started to make what he called a " buzeenus," an open wooden box with a ball carved inside, only it broke.

Mr. Charles often sat watching the Little Sister, but not as if he noticed her particularly, and Mr. Middleton watched and listened to us all, and sometimes

told pleasant stories. He was mostly silent though, smoking and looking up into the trees, quietly and serenely; unless we did charades or little plays, and then you never would believe he could act so, and be so funny. He acted Bottom and all the clowns together, and said:

"Pray, Masters! Fly, Masters!"

So that we nearly died of laughing. We never knew when he was going to do it; he would be sitting perfectly quiet, then suddenly say:

"Ha, dogs!"

And do a scene between Saladin and the Templar, or break out into Macbeth, till Maggie cried, "Lord save us!"; and then the minute we stopped he would take up his cigar again, and sit peacefully without a word for the rest of the evening.

The Little Sister loved the early morning, and was up with the birds, and it was then we had our swims together. It was

so beautiful, with the shafts of early sunlight falling down over the trees, and she seemed very like the early morning herself, lovely and bright and fresh.

"Flora," she said, as we were going down one morning with our white towel wrappers over our bathing suits, "you know I believe that everything really is like this inside!"

"What do you mean?" I said.

"Everything suffering and wrong," she said. "You don't know, but I do. You see I have lived in New York with my other uncle, Uncle Sam, who is a doctor, and he sees the very poor. It's like some kind of quicksand, or a swamp, they can't even *think* cleanly. But I believe it really is like this, all clear and clean inside, *everything*, even the cities, and everything suffering and bad. I believe this is the real thing underneath."

She stood for a minute with her head thrown back, breathing the cold sweet

air and the white mist, which was melting up in sunshine all around us; then:

"Oh!" she suddenly said, "How cold it is!" and stepped down to the ledge, to where it went off deep and clear, and dove.

Sometimes she would say that she must take to the woods, and then as I have said she would be gone all day, running and climbing and singing through the forest. She never said where she had been or what she had been doing, but she seemed then like some young wild creature, a young bird, or deer, or fawn.

Not when any one was sick or hurt, though! Then she was as practical as Maggie or Mamma.

One night Maggie was ill, from having caught a cold, and I waked hearing her groaning to herself, and crept softly out of bed and into her tent. There was a lantern lighted, and the Little Sister in a scarlet wrapper, like Mamma's, with

long scarlet tails dangling, and furry slippers, was leaning over her, holding out a cup of something hot and steaming.

"Do take it, Maggie, please," she said. "I made it myself here on my little lamp. Just take it while it's all hot and steaming, that's a dear. Think how you would make us take it, if it was me or Flora!"

Poor Maggie sat up and drank it, groaning and coughing, and then lay down, and the Little Sister tucked a warm shawl round her shoulders. Then she shook her long hair back, and set some more water to heat over her alcohol lamp. It was a little silver folding lamp, and she had a pretty bright aluminum saucepan to go with it. Soon the water steamed and tinkled and bubbled, and she filled a nice soft red comfortable hot-water bottle. She wrapped it in a clean towel, and gave it to Maggie, and presently, in the warm light tent, Maggie began to grow comfortable, and

then to doze, and the Little Sister and I sat still watching her.

Soon Maggie went fast asleep, so fast that she gave comfortable snores. The Little Sister went softly and leaned over her.

"I think she's all right now," she whispered. "I think she'll sleep, dear Maggie, till breakfast time, and wake up feeling almost well again."

She stood a little while longer, and then, Maggie sleeping perfectly soundly and steadily, gave me a kiss, and we crept back to our tent.

"I've crawled in *under* my bottom blanket, by mistake," she whispered presently, "but never mind, the fir feels so delicious, and not sticky." And in a moment we were both sound asleep.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE DUCK POND TRAIL AND DUCK POND

It was a wonderful morning when we started for Duck Pond. It was all sparkling and still and clear. The two tall mountains, black in the morning light, ran up high into the blue sky to the east, and the lake was like a still jewel, with the shadows of the tall woods round its edge. Everything was fresh and cold with dew, and you felt as if you could run and climb for miles, and like climbing right up to the top of everything.

Only Jerry went with us, and we were to spend the night; and Mr. Charles and Mr. Middleton (we now called him Uncle Lewis too) said they were going

to make sand forts on the beach, and catch horn-pout and eels till we came back.

It was Jerry's plan. He was always making plans, and he had always wanted very much to have us go to Duck Pond. He said the only *real* trout fishing in the world was in Duck Pond — "The rest is diggin' clams beside it."

We all had bright new tin cups at our belts, and I, as well as James and Jerry, had my hunting knife. We all wore brown fringed moccassins, alike, and for once Maggie was sensible, and let me wear my dark blue knickerbockers and my dark blue jersey.

"As ye're to clamber the wild woods like a catamount, I suppose it's fitting ye should be dressed as such, and a young lady's skirts were never made to be destroyed."

As for my hair (neither Mamma nor Maggie will let me cut it off), she parted

it and braided in two very tight long thick braids, and tied it with both tapes and ribbon, and said she *hoped* I would remember how a lady should look.

We started up the trail like a file of Indians. The early morning sunlight was slanting across the high woods, and the lake was lying still and sound asleep, with little curls of mist between the bars of sunlight. The leaves smelled sweet and wet, and sent up wet sweet breaths as we stirred through them.

All the first part was easy. There were soft leaves and leaf mould underfoot, and little delicate ferns. The sunbeams flickered through the green leaves far above, and caught on James's rifle, shining among the trees. Little woodways opened up on every side, leading to fresh delightfulness of leafy undergrowth, and it was like going through Robin Hood's woods in the early morning. When we saw the first gentle pretty deer

tripping down a little green glade, and stopping to look back over their shoulders, it almost seemed as if it *was* Sherwood Forest. The Little Sister thought so too, and soon we played it. Mr. Charles was Robin Hood, at home in camp, and James was Little John, and if he keeps on getting tall so fast he will soon be right for it. The Little Sister said she should be Will Scarlet, he had such pretty clothes, which made us laugh at her, and when we explained to Jerry about Friar Tuck, he said that that would suit him to the ground. That left me for Will Stutely, whom I love best of all, he was so faithful.

Jerry made fun of me about my hunting knife.

"My, but it's big," he said. "I tell ye, if I was a bear now, I should be scared! Takes a strong girl to carry a knife like tha. I tell you it's heavy! I don't know, though, but I could rig a little log-sledge,

fit to hold it, and Jim and me could carry it together for ye, easy!"

Never mind though, my knife was very useful.

For a mile and a half it was all like the trails we knew so well, beautiful sunny woods. After the fork of the road, though, where the old trail turns to the south, and the Duck Pond trail keeps on and down to the east, the work began. The path went gradually down and down and down, till we were in deep rich heavy almost *tropic* woods, waist-deep in ferns.

"But, Jerry!" the Little Sister said, pushing her way along, "This isn't walking, it's swimming!"

The tree trunks were like great columns as you looked up them, and I am sure the sunlight never came through the thick green above, but the woods had their own warm rich climate, like a greenhouse.

Underfoot was deep moist moss and ferns, but you could not tell what you were stepping on, for you were climbing and scrambling wherever you could get through, over great fallen trees grown deep with moss, in between twisted roots, and through the tall cinnamon and ostrich ferns, where sometimes only the shaking tops showed where you were.

"This is warm," Jerry said, standing out on a mossy log to mop his face.

We certainly looked like Indians by now. We were as red as red. The air, as I have said, was heavy in the woods, and we were out of breath, and our faces and hands were covered with moss and bark.

James went ahead without talking much, as usual, making a way for us through the heavy ferns and helping us over rocks and fallen trees.

"Jerry!" the Little Sister said, as he swung her up from between two tall mossy

rocks where she had slipped, and set her on the top of one to cool off.

"I believe this wood we're in is magic! I believe we are bewitched and shall go wandering round till all of us have long gray hair and beards!"

She put her hair back from her face and sat there out of breath, but her hair had not got untidy, it only curled more softly round her face.

"This party of mine," Jerry said, "has got to take its noontime nap, or si-esta. Jim, you give a hand here to young lady, and help her through the rest of this gardin' grass, while I take Missy up." And before I could speak, he swung me up on his shoulder.

"Jerry!" I cried. "But I am much too heavy!"

"That's what you are!" he said, "as heavy as a yeast-cake. Feel myself risin' up, like biscuit dough!"

We went on a little farther, when

Jerry stopped and looked around him, nodded, and then turned to the right for a few yards, and down in the ferns there was a little spring. There it lay, all dark like a Scotch cairngorm, so clear that you could hardly believe it was real, and fringed with ferns. It did not bubble, but dimpled softly all over, and a tiny stream flowed quietly away among the ferns, crowded with grateful moss.

It was the sweetest water I have ever drunk, cold and delicious. We took long draughts in turn, and put our faces in, and then Jerry and James left the Little Sister and me to rest by it.

"Oh, Flora!" she said, "was ever water so nice! And now I think we ought to curl up and take a nap here in the ferns."

After awhile Jerry and James came back, and Jerry had had a nap too, as his doctors strictly recommended it, he

said, and we had luncheon, bread and dates and cold venison and chocolate, extremely thankfully around the little spring.

After we started out again the trail swung to the south.

"A-ah" the Little Sister said, drawing her breath, "it's getting easier!"

It was, and we went more and more lightly upwards and upwards till we found ourselves in delicious beechwood openings with dry gray crunching lichens underfoot and lady's slipper leaves and seed-vessels, climbing up one of the lower spurs of Ega. Rocks cropped out, covered with lichens too along the ridge, and the long spur fell away below our feet.

At last we were high enough to see out above the trees, when James, who was ahead, called out:

"Look down! Look down!"

And there, far below us, was the little pond.

I never can forget the way it looked. In the first place, we were nearer to the first of the twin mountains, Ega, than I had ever thought I should be. We actually were on it. I had always thought of it as far away, a distant splendid thing to look at, and there it was right above us, height after height. It was so huge and high it seemed to look down over us as if it were some great towering creature or person.

And far below us was the little pond. It nestled at the foot of the tall mountains, in a wide belt of heavy black impenetrable spruce, which looked like a black band between the two forest ridges shutting in the valley.

It was to avoid this black close spruce growth that Jerry had taken us up over the spur of the mountain. We had though to go through part of it, and it was the most scratch-face place I ever saw. We forced our way down through

it with our eyes shut (after swinging ourselves and almost dropping from tree to tree down the steep slope of open wood above it), and our hands and faces were all little sharp red scratches and our hair was full of bits of stick and twigs, and pulled and tweaked in every direction.

The pond was like a tiny lake, all quite complete, when we burst finally out of the last stretch of spruce woods, and a light breath stirred across it, cooling our hot faces. There it lay quiet and smiling in the sun. There was a little white beach, hard and firm. There were two rocky points opposite each other, and a cat-tail swamp, rustling and mysterious. Close to us was an open marsh, a frog-swamp, thick with sphagnum and sweet-gale and blueberry bushes, where deer were munching as we came along.

Jerry and James began fishing immediately, while the Little Sister and I explored along the shore.

All Jerry said was true about the fishing. The water really was alive with trout. James had his rod together and was out on a point of rock and fishing, all in a minute, and the water dimpled and gurgled in a dozen flashes every time he cast. He and Jerry fished and fished, but Jerry fished with nothing but a feather on the end of his line, no hook. He said that James was getting all we could carry home, and more was a sin; that it injured their complexion to be handled, and their health to be long out of water, that in this way he got the pure art of the thing, and he chuckled and chuckled as the trout gobbled and fought after his empty line.

The afternoon came early behind the mountains, and it was then that the little pond began to be mysterious, that we realized how far in the heart of the great woods we were. The shadow fell across it, and the coolness of night came

early on. The great twin peaks above us changed gradually and wonderfully. It was as if veil after veil of dark soft purple fell across them, deepening every hollow and ravine, till at last they towered up soft black, with a pale yellow light that showed behind them, and the pond reflected the blackness and the pale light both.

Our fire blazed up with a cheerful roar of sparks. We had our trout for supper, cooked on the coals, and Jerry sang us different funny ballads, and the Canada jays flew down as soon as they saw us, and stayed until after their bedtime.

Ours came nearly as early. We suddenly were hardly able to move. I really think I never have been so sleepy. The Little Sister and I went down to wash our faces and hands, and there by the water we woke up again for a minute. The point shut off the light of

our fire. It was perfectly still. The dark woods were close around the little pond and a gray trail of stars fell into it. You could not see the mountains, but you felt them.

"Flora, how sweet the water is!" the Little Sister said as she knelt and put her face down into it.

I slept in a hollow lined with pine-needles. The little point was all in friendly hollows and ledges. The Little Sister and I slept on one side of it, Jerry and James on the other, and Jerry and James filled our nests with balsam-fir branches.

I slept like a bear in winter I believe, and then woke up suddenly at midnight. The night had changed, I cannot say quite how. It was still, still, but different, more alive. I lay listening to the wonderful living silence, wondering what it was that had waked me up. There are two different changes in the night. There

"WE STOOD ON THE LITTLE BEACH."

is another kind of stillness that comes just before dawn.

It was James who had waked me. He had touched me very softly on my shoulder.

"Flora," he whispered, "I oughtn't to wake you up, but come down a minute to listen to the stars."

He took my hand to help me down the rocks. Our fire had sunk to a soft glow of coals, and Jerry was asleep on the other side of it.

The stars blazed and were bright in the black frosty sky. They were like jewels all over it, and the little lake at our feet shone full of them. You could half make out the two tall mountains, running up into the sky, black in the starry darkness around them. We stood on the firm hard sand of the little beach. It was very still, and every breath of the night air was clear and cold; and then high overhead we heard a little still clear sound.

Of course it is not really hearing the stars, at least I suppose it could not possibly be. James does not know what it is, and neither do I. You can hear it sometimes on the still frosty nights in winter, and sometimes on perfectly clear northwest nights in summer. It seems to come from far, far, and is high up and very clear. Perhaps it is frost.

We heard it twice.

"There!" James said, and then we went back to sleep.

In the morning we all woke up early, I think because of the gray jays flying down round us, and we were to start home pretty early besides. James had wrapped his trout in wet moss, and put them in a cool hollow in the rocks so that they were as fresh as fresh.

The sun rose higher, clearing off the last mists from the mountains, and soon after breakfast we started. It grew warm and delicious, and sweet smells came

from the pretty open swamps. We climbed up and up the high steep slope of beechwood, and about ten o'clock were at the top of the ridge, where we were to turn to go down to our own woods.

I stopped to look back at the little pond. There it lay far below us, deep and still and clear, the black woods mirrored in it, and the blue sky.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BULL MOOSE

"CHILDREN," Mr. Charles said, looking up to where the August moon was showing silver through the black trees, "I am going to show you how a moose looks when he is really startled. Yes, Maggie, I know it's bedtime. I won't keep them long. We shall forget that we are sleepy in a minute. Come, and don't stumble."

He gave the Little Sister his hand to help her over a root.

Uncle Lewis wished us luck, and said we should find the button-bush swamps and the sweet-rush far more fragrant at night, and that he thought plover flew higher in moonlight than on dark nights,

but that we must all be good and come home early.

Out on the lake it was still, solemn moonlight, melting away into soft silvery haziness.

"*Oh!*" the Little Sister said, drawing in her breath and squeezing my hand in hers.

James took the bow of the canoe, and Mr. Charles the stern. I sat curled up at Mr. Charles's feet, and the Little Sister next me, where the moonlight fell on her hair and her white forehead.

We slipped along under the high black shore, and the moon followed through the black tree-tops, a piece of living silver.

Sure enough, button-bush and sweet-rush are sweeter far at night. We felt their breath as we slipped past the swamps.

Nobody spoke, only when James said softly:

"Rock, Mr. Charles, a little way to

the left," and the moonlight showed a sharp black nose of rock.

Soft rivers of white fog rolled from the mouths of the streams, and it was shivery when we passed through one with a gentle ghostly rustling through the reeds. The fog was soft and cold. We could hardly see the opposite shore or the islands, for curtains of silvery mist were round them and kept them half hidden. The lake might have been inside a great pearl or an opal. There were no loons out, but sure enough, high overhead we heard the call of plover. (You never can see them. You hear them over your head, right between you and the stars, and you lie on your back in a canoe, watching and watching, but though they will whistle in answer if you whistle, you never can see them.)

Beyond the third point the lake runs up into the long deep narrow Ega Bay, and we turned into it. At the very

head of it is shallow water with lily-pads, and I felt that it was here that we should find the moose. Sure enough Mr. Charles whispered:

"Don't lift your paddle now James, slip it along," and we slipped on without a breath or a sound, till we came nearer and nearer to the lily-pads. Mr. Charles lifted his paddle out with hardly a drop, and we floated on, with I think none of us breathing. The canoe brought up against a stretch of reeds, and there was a splashing and a snorting cough, and there, so near that I almost jumped with surprise, was the great beast himself. The air — you could not call it wind — was towards us and away from him, and he had no idea that we were there at all. He fed steadily, snorting and nozzling his nose down into the water, pulling up clumps of water-lily roots, and the smell came to us, like queer damp pineapple smell. He munched and munched, and

every little while he changed his feet and coughed.

He looked like a giant beast, he was so big. His antlers were partly grown and in the velvet. I don't suppose he was as big as an elephant, but really he almost looked it. He was enormously tall, with a great heavy head and a black bell under his chin. The moon shone suddenly on something bright at my feet, and I saw that Mr. Charles had his rifle in the canoe beside him.

We waited, and I don't think that we as much as breathed while we stayed watching him. At last the Little Sister gave a sudden shiver. Mr. Charles drew out his paddle, and rapped sharply on the side of the canoe. The sound startled me almost as much as the moose. He flung up his antlers, with a great startled flounce and snort, and turned and scrambled out of the water and was gone, with a tremendous crashing

through the woods. I still sat staring after he was gone, I am sure with my mouth open.

"Are you cold?" Mr. Charles said to the Little Sister. "Put on my coat. It was a shabby trick to startle him, — my faith, we made him jump! — but in another minute he'd have seen us anyhow. How still it is!"

It was. You could hardly believe that the great beast had been there just before.

Mr. Charles turned and paddled out again into the lake, and when we were well out stopped and let the canoe float quietly, while he struck a match and lighted a cigarette.

The moon was up full now. The whole lake seemed to be soft silvery light. It stretched far, far, far as the sea, and leading away across it was the wake, like a wide field of silver wheat.

"Half-past nine!" Mr. Charles said,

shutting his watch with a click. " Maggie will shake us well, and we deserve it."

It showed how wonderfully Mr. Charles had gained, that he could paddle. It was weeks since he had had any attack of pain at all. He leaned on James's shoulder to get into the canoe, but once in, he paddled stronger than Tom himself. He limped just as much, and as I have said, he limps still, and of course always will, but he lifted or swung himself along by a branch or a tree, or rock, or anything, so well you hardly noticed it.

When the Little Sister and I went down to brush our teeth the soft hazy look had changed entirely. It had come clear from the northwest and was all black and silver. The wind was blowing more and more strongly, and the waves rising. Little rings of fire changed and flashed on the black water near in under the shore, and out on the lake it had changed to a look of molten silver,

with the moon's wake a shimmer of white fire.

"See, Flora!" the Little Sister said, scattering a shower of bright drops with her bare foot. "Ow, how cold it is! I cannot help it, and it's mean too, for you mustn't, but I *have* to go in, for just a duck and a swim. Maggie won't know till I am out again." And she showed me that she had her bathing-suit on under her scarlet wrapper.

In she went, with a flash into the moonlit water, but Maggie came just then and scolded her thoroughly, and made her take hot ginger tea, and go to bed with two hot-water bottles.

CHAPTER XX

THE FAR-AWAY POND

It was the next day that we went to the Far-Away Pond, at least that we started for it. This was the expedition which Jerry said did not "expedish," but it was almost the nicest that we had at all.

It was Jerry of course, as usual, who proposed it. He had talked and talked about the Far-Away Pond till James and the Little Sister and I were quite excited.

"Now Jerry, Jerry," Mr. Charles said, "you have got expeditions on the brain. You will be getting up nice little trips next to the mountains of the moon. Have you ever been to this pond at all?"

No, Jerry had never been to it, but he knew the stream which he was certain flowed out of it, and the pond grew nicer every time he talked about it; and I never could tell afterwards whether he really had believed in it or not.

"The nicest little place," he would say, "There, it's beautiful. And being so retired, in the woods, it's come to be headquarters for things rare and valuable." Why, everything nice grew there, he didn't know but turnips, and as for white blackbirds and wild-strawberry birds, they nested there "regular as the first of April." (Wild-strawberry birds were Jerry's favorite bird to talk about, and I am ashamed to say I spent a long time hunting for their nests. He said that they were shaped just like little round tomatoes, with red and white spotted feathers; they tasted and smelled just like wild strawberries, and very few people knew anything about them.)

"Trout?" Mr. Charles said, and Jerry said they were so thick you could put down your rocking-chair and rock on them.

It was a still warm hazy summer day, with the lake looking wide as the sea, when we set out together. Jerry and I were in one canoe, Mr. Sawyers and Mr. Middleton in another, and Mr. Charles and James paddled the Little Sister in the third. Tom and Maggie were at home minding the camp, as Maggie had a toothache.

The stream was at the very head of the lake at the northwest bay. We passed all the way close under the wooded shore, or through the lovely channels between the islands. We saw schools and schools of little fish. Two eagles were soaring and fishing in the sun, and against the dark woods of an island we saw a lonely gull flying, and wondered how ever he came there.

It was four miles' paddle to the head of the lake. The mouth of the stream was hidden in tall-growing rushes. You never would have guessed that it was there till you pushed through the reeds, and came out suddenly on its clear dark windings.

We were the first explorers, so far as we knew. The stream wound and wound through a wide stretch of feathery grasses, which reached up in a close wall over our heads, and we slipped quietly between them. The grasses were thick with every kind of lovely flower, — meadow rue, smelling sweet and moist, and cardinal flower, orchises, purple and white, — and they were bright with butterflies. Duck got up with a whirr, and teal and loons. The tall grasses stretched away, a sea of marsh, and it was a most sunshiny place, all wild and lonely and happy.

"Dear me, look, everybody, at that string of turtles," Mr. Charles said.

"Eleven, twelve, thirteen, on one log. Now that is a sight."

They were all on a black log as we glided by, sticking their foolish heads up in the sun, with the heat shining on their black and yellow backs. Mr. Charles waved his hand, and they all went off with a startled "plop" as we passed by.

We wound through this great marsh for at least an hour, till suddenly, like a door, we entered the tall shadow of the woods. Here it was different, solemn and beautiful, and we followed one still forest reach after another, like green cloisters, the woods so tall and deep that the sunlight only reached through in twinkles and flashes.

"*Oh!*" the Little Sister said, and I don't think any of us spoke for mile after mile; till Mr. Charles asked the Little Sister if she would mind singing, and she sang one song after another in her clear voice.

"My, but it's clear," said Jerry in our canoe, "she sings like the birds in the morning."

"Now Jerry sing," the Little Sister called across, and Jerry said this singing out-of-doors was bad for the voice — "Adelina Patty never does it," — and sang us the funniest ballad, beginning

"Last Friday night the wind was east,
Tittery Nan tum Tary oh!
We had a husking in the West —
Fairy Nay, Tory No,
Tittery Nan tum Tary oh!

"And old Joe Dinzey, he was there, —"

But just then our canoe slid quietly on to a rock.

"There," Jerry said as he got out to lift her off. "This is what comes of being led off by the Muses."

We had luncheon where a great rock runs out at a turn of the stream, and every one told stories afterwards, every

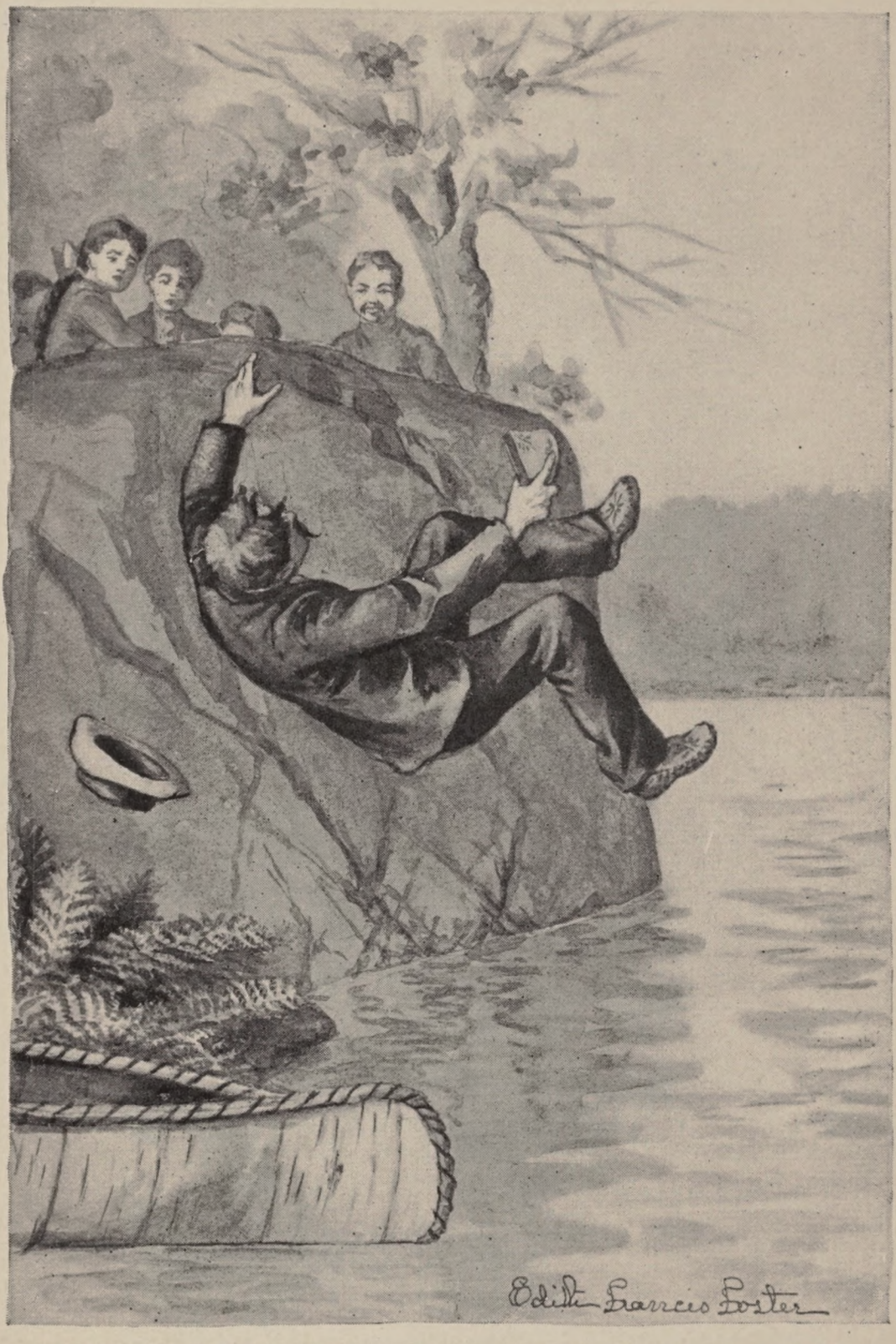
one, that is, but Mr. Sawyers, who of course did not say anything. The water flowed by, clear as a topaz, over clean bright pebbles, and on the farther side of the rock was a deep pool with moss-grown rocks and logs, and ferns bending over, where fairies might go in swimming.

Jerry went in, though he was not a fairy. He sat on the top of the rock eating his lunch, and reaching too far for a doughnut, fell in with a tremendous splash.

"There," he said calmly, wading out with water running off him in little rivers all over, "that comes of having a too lofty nature. I vaulted up there to that there pebble, and you know what Shakespeare says:

> "'Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
> And falls in splash.'"

After luncheon Jerry climbed a tree, to "dry his flowing raven locks" (his



"HE FELL IN WITH A MOST TREMENDOUS SPLASH."

hair is red), but really it was to look for his Far-Away Pond. A little way farther on he climbed another, on the other side of the stream, and James climbed one too, but said there was nothing but unbroken forest. You could not even see the river we were paddling on.

"Your pond is living up to its name, Jerry," he said, and Jerry said it did that right along.

After a while we came to what looked like a fork in the stream. Jerry scratched his head and thought, and said he didn't know but the eastward branch would take us quicker, and we turned and paddled down it.

"Now Jerry," Mr. Charles said, after we had gone a little way, it seemed to me into deeper and deeper woods, "this is serious business. Our stream was the branch, and this is the main river. It is deeper, and the current stronger, and what is more, it's flowing the wrong way.

That's the way it is. That's what I have to pay for my bright, sunny, winnin' nature."

When we came out at last, the sun was just going down, lighting the marshes with a last flood of gold, and —

"Look!" James said, and over the gray line of bulrushes we saw the great round pale moon.

CHAPTER XXI

THE BEARS AGAIN

We were at the sphagnum bog, gathering pitcher plants, the Little Sister, Mr. Charles and I. James was out fishing, with a new kind of spinner he had invented, and Mr. Middleton was away botanizing with Tom — his leg had knitted now and was nearly strong again — and his own French-Canadian man, François.

Maggie was with us, as she hoped to find cranberries. The bog was full of them, but none of them were really ripe yet. We got all kinds of things besides our pitcher plants, as we always did when we were at the bog, and I found a woodpecker's feather, black, with round white spots and one spot of crim-

son, dropped on the water at the edge of the pond.

The Little Sister cried out at sight of a sprig of scarlet hobble-bush berries, and sat right down where she was to sketch them. Maggie, with a handkerchief over her head, kept hunting for any berries that might have turned pink a very little.

It was very still and warm in the sunshine, and smelled as usual of sweet wet boggy smells. We had had our luncheon and were all, I think, feeling a little sleepy. I was stringing bunchberries for a necklace and bracelets, and Mr. Charles sat on a mossy log, watching the Little Sister. He had his shot-gun on the log beside him, as Jerry had told him we were "kind of hard up for partridges for supper."

"How still it is!" the Little Sister said, looking up from her painting. "I believe every bird has gone to sleep, and

I am sure I heard them singing a moment ago. I don't wonder, it is so comfortable, and I suppose they have just had their dinner, besides.

"There is a lady sweet and kind,"

she sang to herself, and laughed and sang the pretty song all through:

"I did but see her passing by,
"And yet I love her!
"And yet I love her till I die!"

. . . . . .

Suddenly through the bushes there came a horrible cry. We all jumped to our feet without knowing it, and I know the way people feel in books when they are "frozen with horror," and "rooted to the ground." That was the way I stood, stock-still, and listened. It seemed as if I could not move at all. "The

scream of a panther " was all that I could think of as we stood there, and I broke the string of scarlet berries round my neck.

Then the cry came again, and it had come nearer.

" A wounded bear," Mr. Charles said quietly, closing his lips a little. " No panther. Wait for a minute."

His quick eyes glanced round the little clearing, and the cry came again, and it was nearer, and it seemed as if we could hear crackling and crashing.

" Ah," he said, " now we have it. Straight from the east. He smells us on this wind. Go behind me, all three of you, to that big rock. Keep well behind it, don't look round, and go home quietly."

I suppose we all three of us cried out a little together.

" Do as I tell you, please," Mr. Charles said, quietly, but so that there was nothing

else to do but go. Only Maggie stayed, putting out her hands as if to keep back something.

"Oh my dear lad," she said. "Oh no! not with you lame, and staying here your lone!"

"Maggie," Mr. Charles said very quietly and kindly, "do as I tell you. Take the two girls home." And Maggie went.

"Oh dear," I thought, miserably, "if only James was here!" And then I was glad that he wasn't.

While he was speaking Mr. Charles had been slipping a cartridge out of his gun. He cut at it hard and sharply with his knife, and seemed even to work at it with his teeth, bending or breaking it quickly, and then he slipped it back into its place, and sat down with his gun across his knee and waited.

We did not have time to get even as far as the rock. The cry came again,

horribly nearer, and with a dreadful loud crashing and rending of branches.

"He smells us!" Maggie said, which had a horrible sound. The crashing seemed to be bursting right out of the bushes.

"He only has a shot-gun!" the Little Sister cried, and let go of my hand.

Then I don't know what happened. I don't know if I saw a great mass, dreadfully streaked with red, burst through the bushes straight toward Mr. Charles, or whether I only imagined it. There were two quick shots, and a little half-laughing cry, and when I opened my eyes Mr. Charles was standing leaning a little against the rock behind him, his smoking gun at his feet; a huge black thing lay still almost close to him, and the Little Sister was half crouching, half kneeling side him, with a sharp stone in her hand.

"Yes, Flora dear, the bear is killed

and dead," Mr. Charles said very kindly and gently. I did not seem exactly to be frightened, but I felt dry and queer, and had no voice, and I asked the same question over and over again. I did not mean to, but I could not seem to stop, and I felt that I must ask it very politely. I was holding his coat.

"And we went away and left you, and the Little Sister stayed!"

"The Little Sister stayed," Mr. Charles said, kissing me.

He had taken us over to the other side of the swamp, entirely out of sight of the dead bear, and made me sit on some moss, while he went down to the pond to get some water. Maggie sat on a stump, and was crying a little, while the Little Sister was quietly packing the lunch basket. Her cheeks were very bright and her eyes shining.

"There," Maggie said, wiping her eyes. "And what an old fool, to be sure!

The lad is safe, and the bear is dead, and I'd like to know! And now you are both of-ye to take some peppermint."

Maggie never goes anywhere without peppermint. She says it is good for sorrow and joy and sickness, and she got it out now in a little fat bottle. She made Mr. Charles take it when he came back with the water, although he laughed and made faces. His hair was dripping with water, and I remembered that I had seen blood on his neck and cheek.

"And that Jerry telling me that bears was timid!" Maggie said scornfully as we were walking home.

"But Jerry's quite right, they generally are," Mr. Charles said. "It's not once in years one hears of a bear turning and attacking people. It is only when they are wounded, or else in great hunger. Generally they are about as dangerous as sheep, and one almost forgets they can be anything else. This bear was

badly wounded. I heard a shot myself. Some one — probably François, who hasn't much discretion — shot at and wounded him, and in his crazy rage he struck our trail."

"Oh please don't talk about it!" I could not help saying, and Mr. Charles pressed my hand.

"How did you do it?" James asked, with his eyes bright, as we were sitting safely round the fire that evening. "How could you kill a bear with nothing but a shot-gun, Mr. Charles?"

"And asked to give away my patent explosive invention!" Mr. Charles said. "It really was perfectly easy. In the first place at such close range as we were," — I squeezed his hand (he had been holding me nestled up against him all the evening), and he squeezed mine back, — "the whole charge of shot would probably have struck him, and have killed him at once. But if you want to make perfectly

sure in a tight place, cut or break your cartridge half in two. Then the shot doesn't scatter, the end of the cartridge goes whole like a shell, and it would go through a plank wall like blotting paper. The only trouble is your gun kicks rebelliously. I was a gory mass for several minutes, and I think my jaw will be black and blue as a Scotch plaid by morning."

"I know now," James said, "Jerry told me out fishing. He said you could blow a hole through a cow with it."

Mr. Charles said that just for the minute he had thought it was a panther, though he had never heard one himself, and doubted really whether there were any left. Papa thought so too I knew, though Jerry always says you never can tell.

In the night the Little Sister woke up crying and sobbing, at least she cried in her sleep, and I had to shake her softly to wake her up. At first she did not know

what was the matter, or where she was in the least, and then she laughed through her tears.

"Oh dear! I am *such* a goose!" she said, still laughing and crying, "I thought that I hadn't been frightened the least in the world, and I have been dreaming and dreaming of bears and panthers, oh and *horrible* things! I am coming over beside you, Flora, or I shall go on being a silly!" And she kissed me and we went to sleep together.

CHAPTER XXII

THE HAPPY END

"WHAT is the matter with the Little Sister, Maggie?" I said. "These last three days, ever since Mr. Charles shot the bear, it seems as if I have hardly seen her at all. She has been off in the woods, it seems to me, all day long, and for two evenings she has gone to her tent early, to finish a drawing."

"She has been just as she should be," Maggie said, pursing her lips, "She has been just as a young lady should be, and where she should be. I dare say she would have letters to finish, or other affairs," and Maggie would not say anything more.

I thought I must be imagining, but everything certainly seemed to be queer and different. We had been going for a picnic to one of the circles of islands, and we did not go at all, and there did not seem really to be any reason. Mr. Charles was busy too, and did not come to the fire for a whole evening, but stayed talking to Jerry and finishing letters in his tent.

"What is the matter with every one, Jerry," I said, "these last two days?"

"Well now, these bears," he said, "they do seem to have a curious effect on the nervous system. Maybe it's that that's making folks act kind of curious, though I don't know as I've noticed. Horses, you know, can't stand a bear, not no ways, and it may be, though they don't know it, that it's the same with folks. Brings on a kind of a — commotion — of the whole constitution, or maybe constitutions —" Jerry looked up

at me with a little sort of a twinkle. "You never can tell."

I said then I certainly hoped we should see no more bears, and Jerry said he thought too that we'd find one was enough. I never suspected at all, but I do not think it is the kind of thing you can suspect about. It suddenly happens, and then you feel as if it must always have been so.

I was getting huckleberries just beyond the point. I was quite hidden, I suppose, by the tall bushes, and I dropped all my berries, I was so startled at hearing voices close to me.

It was Maggie, and she was talking to Mr. Charles. I started to speak, to show them I was there, but Mr. Charles's voice broke in, so strong and full of trouble, as if speaking in pain, that I could not.

"But Maggie, how can I!" he said. "I'm lame, I am a cripple!"

"My dear lad," Maggie said gravely

and solemnly, "my dear lad, my dear Charles," — and I could feel sure that she put her hand on his, — "what is that to a young maid, if it is her man? What difference does it make, maimed, halt, or blind, and what's to make up to her, wanting that, for her whole life? If it's her man, I say, it is her man; and if it's not, ye might as well try to hold the clouds in the sky. Ask her; it is her right.

"And as for useless" she said, "ask them that know ye. When was a good servant hindered by halting steps? It's my belief that the works ye are to do, gravely and in the Lord's sight, for the good of many, are not yet counted; and that it is to be together, man and wife, as the good Lord intended."

I know I ought to have spoken. I had no right to hear a single word, but how could I make a great noise and crackling, right at their feet? But just as I was try-

ing in a great hurry to crawl away, Mr. Charles said:

"God bless you, Maggie. I shall ask her to-day," and they walked away together.

I could think of nothing better to do than to pick up my berries, which I did with such hot and startled clumsy fingers that I dropped half of them at least all over again. I thought I had better stay and pick my bowl full, and when it was picked I went on, still with a hot face, to the Second Beach.

When I got there I came out plump upon the Little Sister. I gave a little gasp and stepped back noiselessly. I had not come out through the bushes, so she did not see me, thank goodness. She was sitting on the beach, with the morning sun on her hair, looking so pretty, so pretty. She had one hand on the ground, the way she liked to sit, but she was not drawing or painting. Her pencil had

dropped on the sand and her piece of paper had nothing on it at all.

I was just turning to go softly back through the bushes when I heard steps, quick steps, though halting, Mr. Charles's, and heard his voice in a tone I had never heard before, as if something were his, and he had claimed it.

"Elizabeth!" he said. "Elizabeth!" This time there was no question at all of what I must do, and I lay down perfectly flat in the bushes, with my fingers stuffed in my ears.

"Maggie was perfectly right," James said afterwards on the roof of his hut, "and there was a lady here in the woods after all, and he found her, and I do think it was wonderful. Now you have hooked those fish-hooks into your skirt."

I had not thought about the hooks at all. I could only think of the great house in Boston, and of Mr. Charles lying there

so white and ill. "Fretting away in suffering and bitterness," was what kind Mrs. Carey had said. No one could ever say it now any more.

"Flora, darling," the Little Sister whispered to me that night in the tent, "I am so happy! It is so very wonderful!"

She knelt beside me with her cheek turned away, and her face quite hidden in the sweet green fir. "It is so very wonderful!" she whispered again, softly.

"Flora — it seems — the sunrise — the moonlight — the great woods — it does seem as if this were a part of their meaning. It sounds selfish. Of course they are themselves, bigger, more huge, more wonderful than we can know; but it does seem as if they partly meant this, too —"

I had cried a little, it was so beautiful, so lovely; and the Little Sister cried too, happy tears, and laid her cheek a minute

against mine, and then kissed me, and crept softly into bed.

How our kaleidoscope was turning and turning! And I don't believe any other one ever turned so beautifully, or had such bright colors.

Tom went with the mail in the morning, and the next day he came back with the letters, and they were all coming directly, Papa, Mamma, and Billy! They had not written before because it might not be certain, and now the letters had been delayed by a rise of the stream at the Forks, and they were coming that evening!

"Billy is quite well," Mamma wrote. "Thin of course, and white, but eating like a young polar bear or grizzly, and Jerry will have to allow I should think a barrel of flapjacks. But just wait till he has been in camp a week and watch him grow fat."

How we flew about!

"Like water-beetles, just for all the world," Jerry said chuckling. "My, but we shall be clean."

And then as Maggie came by, dreadfully busy, in the middle of a wonderful flapping and dusting and cleaning, —

"How about a little sand-soap now, to clean up the trees? I'd hate to have them look the way they do. They ain't been regular scrubbed, well now I don't know when," and Maggie said she'd take the broom to him.

"Flowers, Flora," the Little Sister said, coming with her hands full of goldenrod. "And let's get all the scarlet berries that we can, and put them all about the dining-room tent."

It did look very gay, and Mr. Charles brought a great sheaf of cat-o'-nine-tails and stood them in the corners.

At last it was dusk and we went down to the beach. The men had lighted a great blazing bonfire. It was no use

straining your eyes out into the dark lake, for nothing came; but we could not help it, and it seemed as if I could not wait or keep still. Mr. Charles and the Little Sister were watching from the rocks, where the stars shone in the water, and James was whittling beside the bonfire, but I could neither sit still nor stand in one place. I changed about from one rock to another, and fluttered about, and I am afraid fidgeted, which Maggie cannot bear.

"Do now, Miss Flora, child, be still," she called to me. "Dancing about won't bring them any nearer, nor wearing yourself out like a flibbertigibbet," and so I went over and sat down by Jerry.

"You do just as she says," he said, with his hand on my shoulder. "You just keep dignified, like Jeremiah. Why I knew a young gal once, and there, she grew all bald, she flew about so. It don't pay to hurry.

"Old Je-re-miah,
He don't get excited.
He always keeps ca'm,
He don't give a —

Well, I do seem to be a person to talk to a young lady, to be sure," Jerry said, scratching his head, but he went on with rhymes:

"Agitation doesn't count,
This here comes from wisdom's fount" —

till James called:

"Flora! Flora! See, there is the light!"

And far in the darkness of the lake we saw the yellow star.

So we were all in camp together at last. Billy was thin, and very pale and white, but I don't think I ever saw anything look so satisfied as his face when he looked about the camp all lighted up

with firelight. He shared the tent with James, and Mr. Charles slept with Mr. Middleton, but the Little Sister and I still had our tent together.

This was our happy summer in the woods; and that night in my tent, looking out to watch the white northern lights (which meant that autumn was nearer, but of course we cannot stay here all our lives: as nice kind Miss Bennett said, Think of the cats!), I thought over again how wonderful it had been, what nobody could ever have believed, and how in a way it all came out of the hole in the cellar, of our Ragged Mine. I could not imagine now not having always known James, nor Mr. Charles, at all, nor now the Little Sister.

It was a cool night, very clear and still. The dear lake lay quite quiet, full of stars, with only a little lapping against the rocks, and in the starlight, soft white fog-rivers began coming in between the

islands. I heard the high call of a plover overhead, but it was too cold to sit up watching long, so I crept into my soft fir bed, and fell asleep.

POSTSCRIPT

JAMES is coming to spend the winter with us. His father has to be in Alaska all winter, and he and Billy are drawing plans already for an ice-boat.

Jerry is going to his sister's, where he can see cows. He says there is nothing likes cows; they keep the spirits calm and the mind untroubled. He is going to play the accordion and read "Robinson Crusoe," and he has promised faithfully to write to me, and I am going to write to him once every month.

James and Billy and I are going to Mr. Charles' for the whole of the holidays; but the best thing is that after their wedding in June, Mr. Charles and the Little Sister are coming straight up here to camp,

and Jerry is coming up to cook for them. So they will have the woods and the dear lake again, together; and after a month we are all coming up, Maggie and Tom and all of us, to join them, so we shall have the same delightful dear time over again.

"Only better!" Mr. Charles said.

And the Little Sister smiled and blushed, and said

"Yes."

THE END.

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